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Coproducing Spaces of Dissent

Greg Bond

A dissertation submitted to the University of Bristol in accordance with the requirements for award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Science

School of Geographical Sciences, July 2018

Word count: 58,433

Abstract

This thesis sets about coproducing an approach to filmmaking that will enable an encounter between the viewer and the film in which habitual ways of thinking and being can be challenged and disrupted. This approach to filmmaking was coproduced with Coexist, a social enterprise based in Bristol. Conducting this project ‘on the ground’ with a social enterprise led to the adoption of an iterative approach, in which the research is continuously informed by and developed in response to the needs and ideas of the community partner. This iterative process is further inflected by the decision to conduct a practice-as-research project, in keeping with a new direction in the social sciences, where arts practice is not understood only as a knowledge-communicating but also a knowledge-generating practice. We therefore harnessed the unique capacities of arts practice to enable new understandings of the everyday social tensions and political issues confronting the community partner.

The film-based practice that forms the impetus of this thesis reaches toward non-representational aspects of life as a means of enabling change. To foreground the less tangible textures of everyday life we engaged with the concept of haptic visibility in film theory to harness an embodied approach to filmmaking. The intention is to implement film as an affecting and affected space and to enable greater critical engagement within a social enterprise that is experiencing symptoms of institutionalisation in its quest for economic sustainability. The films were therefore coproduced as direct interventions within Coexist’s regulatory processes.

Acknowledgements

This thesis is the product of an ongoing relation of coproduction between the Productive Margins research programme and the participating community partner Coexist. My initial engagement with the project was greatly shaped by individuals helping lead and coordinated this process, in particular Morag McDermont and Heidi Andrews at the University of Bristol, with special support from my fellow PhD colleague and friend Kaylee Perry. It is difficult to single out individuals among the Coexist team, as there have been countless moments of support, intrigue and encouragement expressed that go way beyond what one could ever expect from a research partner. I would like to thank Jamie Pike and Rebecca Baxter for helping create and facilitate this opportunity for me. Each have shown a wisdom and kindness that cannot be underestimated, welcoming me into the team and offering guidance whenever I found myself unsure of where I was going. Many other team members and associates of Coexist have also contributed to this experience, creating a truly remarkable convivial spirit that I will cherish for the rest of my life. I would like to highlight the work of collaborators Brendan Tate, Daniel Balla and Ari Cantwell for their direct influence on the content and direction of this doctoral research project. This thesis was written in the belief that there is something immensely important happening on the ground, often in the cracks of society. There is a great wealth of experiential knowledge, progressive ideas and innovative techniques to be accessed through engaged research; the new relations and connections facilitated open up new possibilities that can help bring about positive social change.

This research project has been the most enlivening and enduring experiment I have undertaken so far in my life. It has presented the opportunity to engage with the social world and my own creativity in a manner that is often not possible within our current society and these so-called times of austerity. The experiences, knowledges and perspectives I have engaged with will shape my own trajectory in life for many years to come. There are many people that have directly contributed to my own development.

First and foremost I would like to thank my supervisors, Naomi Millner, Angela Piccini, Wendy Larner and JD Dewsbury for their valuable oversight and constructive comments, advice and ideas that have greatly helped me to improve both academically and as a person to successfully realise this research project. I will forever be indebted to their patience and commitment.

I deeply thank my family and friends for showing support and being a constant reassurance throughout the process, particularly for continuously reminding me that there are always more important things in life, namely those moments of happiness shared with loved ones.

Finally, I particularly want to express my gratitude to my partner Frankie for always showing love, care and support. Frankie has shown immense patience, accepting my many absences from social occasions and always standing with me during the more difficult moments of this journey. I am now certain that if we can make it through this experience we can endure anything life might throw our way.

Author's Declaration

I declare that the work in this dissertation was carried out in accordance with the requirements of the University's *Regulations and Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes* and that it has not been submitted for any other academic award. Except where indicated by specific reference in the text, the work is the candidate's own work. Work done in collaboration with, or with the assistance of, others, is indicated as such. Any views expressed in the dissertation are those of the author.

SIGNED: DATE:.....

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There is no longer a question of how one should live, or how one should act. There is only a question of how one might live...

...The structure of our society, the weight of history, the legacy of our language all conspire to keep the question from us, and to keep us from it. Our conformity is not solely a result of individual cowardice; it is built into the world we inhabit.

Todd May

Rather than retreat from the world, they have merely stepped back for a fuller view.

Amos Vogel

INTRODUCTION

“Art is about changing the world... even a little bit...
getting people to reconsider reality.”

(Doug Francisco, Cube Cinema, Bristol, Field Notes: 08/10/15)

In this thesis I analyse the coproduction of three films I made with Coexist, a registered Community Interest Company, who acted as the community partner for this doctoral research project. The films were made as direct interventions within Coexist’s everyday practice as part of the Productive Margins research programme. The impetus was to engage with the ethical and political tensions that the grassroots organisation embraces on a daily basis, while trying to sustain a dilapidated former office block as a functioning community and arts hub in central Bristol. As this thesis will affirm, Coexist aim to affect positive change within wider society by providing low-cost space to a myriad of different social and arts-based projects and independent workers. The films were coproduced as a means to engage with the micro-power relations embedded within Coexist’s regulatory processes. Approaching everyday ethical and political tensions by thinking through film practice created the capacity for new ideas and perspectives to emerge. Where financial pressures or conventional business models might restrict Coexist’s more egalitarian ambitions in their everyday practice, the films acted as *spaces of dissent*, where governance structure and procedure could be challenged; dominant discourses disrupted; disagreements confronted; and new ways of thinking enabled.

Background

To elucidate why we utilised film practice as a means to create spaces of dissent, it is helpful to pause and consider the political and cultural climate from which Coexist first emerged. There was a pronounced squatting movement within the Stokes Croft area of Bristol during the early to mid-2000s. It was a period of time when the transformation of the urban landscape was being increasingly dictated by private developers and market-led interests. Squatting was a means of providing alternate spaces to counteract an increasingly pervasive consumer culture and the reduction of communal spaces. A notable point of contention was the perceived ‘Disneyfication’ of society taking place just a few hundred yards away, with the development of the multi-million pound shopping precinct Cabot Circus.



Figure 0.1: Cabot Circus shopping mall, in Bristol City Centre

The process is called ‘Disneyfication’ because, as in Disneyland, every inch of the space has been designed to suit a preconceived order, a way of being in which the flow of commerce is central to all activities. Activist writer Anna Minton specifically mentions Cabot Circus in her writings on the observed social divisions caused by market-led regeneration of cities, lamenting the:

creation of new environments characterised by high security, ‘defensible’ architecture, and strict rules and regulations governing behaviour. Cycling, skateboarding and inline skating are often banned. So are busking and selling the Big Issue, filming, taking photographs and – critically – political protest. (Minton, 2012)

Within these ‘new environments’ human behaviour is predetermined by architectural design and the regulation of private space. The regulation of space affects how bodies perform in space, meaning space is produced through constant conflict and negotiation (Mitchell 1996; Valentine, 1996; Ruddick, 1996; Hubbard, 2001; Ruppert, 2006; Chan and Sharma, 2006; Koch and Latham, 2012).

To counteract the pervasive consumer culture and its invasion of space, squatter movements reclaimed private spaces and opened them up to the community. The epigraph of this chapter is a quotation taken from a public talk given by Doug Francisco, in which he stated that ‘art is about changing the world... even a little bit... getting people to reconsider reality’ (Field Notes, 08/10/15). The statement is contextualised by Francisco’s position as ‘ringleader’ of the Invisible Circus, an anarchist theatre troupe who were prominent within Bristol’s squatter movement. In their initial incarnation, from 2006 until 2010, their shows combined a mix of vaudeville and cabaret, yet the aesthetic of their ‘art’ extended much further. It encompassed the whole process of squatting vacant buildings in the Stokes Croft area of Bristol. This process would entail locating a vacant building; clearing away any debris, which might include animal excrement or drug paraphernalia; finding areas where people could sleep; creating a clean space where communal meals could be made, often with food scavenged from supermarket skips; constructing a stage; devising a show; and then putting on a show that was open to the public. It was a process that required a committed effort and long hours from individuals with little to no money, all done in the full knowledge that their occupation of a space would soon end. Consequently, their role in ‘getting people to reconsider reality’ was only ever ephemeral.

The possibility of transferring the ephemeral actions of squatter movements into a sustainable model in Stokes Croft materialised from the global financial crisis of 2008. The financial crisis foregrounded the nascent need for alternatives to the unregulated financial markets of neoliberal capitalism. Concurrently, with the potential collapse of the global financial system, new opportunities emerged for alternative practice to flourish. In this instance, there was the chance to convert an empty derelict office block on the Stokes Croft high street into a community space on a long-term basis. The redevelopment of the 55,000 sq ft Hamilton House building into private housing was abandoned by property developers Connolly and Callaghan due to the uncertainty of the financial market. With no obvious alternate option, a seemingly unlikely partnership was initiated between the property developers and Coexist, a Community Interest Company formed by a small group of friends trained in wellbeing and drama therapy. By agreeing to enter into a contractual relationship with the property developers, Coexist were able to translate aspects of radical practice into a sustainable economic model. Coexist implement prefigurative politics, in which their modes of organisation reflect the future society they want to help create. They therefore utilise

consensus decision-making tools, flat-hierarchical governance structures and a DiY approach to their practice. Yet despite the techniques and approaches adopted by Coexist, the political intention of the organisation diverges from the radical groups that preceded them. The most notable distinction lay in Coexist's stated ambition to purchase the Hamilton House building; an ambition that has been consistently reaffirmed by founding director, Jamie Pike, as integral in the organisation's quest to build resilient communities and counteract market-led development of urban areas.



Figure 0.2: The Hamilton House building when Coexist gained a lease of the building. Image shows the 'Everybody' banner Coexist hung on the front of the building as their first act.

Prioritising sustainability as a core ambition distinguishes Coexist's practice from many of the radical groups associated with the squatting movement in Stokes Croft. Transience is an intrinsic quality of much radical practice, it is for this reason one can equate the actions of squatter movements to that of a protest or occupation (Bey, 1991; Goyens, 2009). In squatting vacant space and transforming buildings once perceived as derelict into functioning and *live* performance spaces, people reconfigure space through action. As has been emphasised in writing on the Occupy movement of 2011, it is not only the coming together of bodies that is of importance in a protest but how bodies come together *in space* and reconfigure the ground beneath (Butler, 2015). It is in such anarchic ephemeral moments when the 'legitimacy of a regime or its laws is called into question' but when no new regime has yet come to take its place and therefore anything is possible (ibid: 75). It is in such moments *between regimes* when people are liberated from dominant systems of knowledge and codes of behaviour. Within these acts of dissent, it is the *spatial* disruptions that are valued over any notion of permanence. It is therefore possible to understand why, by

agreeing to enter into a long-term fixed contract with property developers, Coexist diverge from the radical practice that came before them: the emphasis has shifted away from existing in the ephemeral moment *between regimes* where ‘dreams exist’ (Bey, 1991: 3). The prioritisation of sustainability means Coexist must instead establish their own sense of order, one that is willing to perform according to the financial and legal models of wider society.



Figure 0.3: Composition created by Coexist showing the different spaces and activities contained within the Hamilton House building

The challenge of how an organisation can achieve economic sustainability and experience growth without betraying their initial purpose or vision is one that Coexist are continuously negotiating both in their long-term strategy and everyday practice. Coexist regularly use the word *resilience* throughout their core purpose and approach documents (See Appendix I). A previous study led by geographer Wendy Larner interrogated the disparity between how Coexist as an organisation understand the term resilience and how it has often been interpreted within academic literature, particularly those commentators on post-politics that are concerned with the inadvertent role of some grassroots organisations in reinforcing a neoliberal status quo (Larner & Moreton, 2016). The literature surrounding post-politics has claimed that alternative and non-capitalist practices act as replacement social welfare under neoliberalism to hide the cracks left by government's withdrawal from society in terms of economic responsibility (Amin et al 2003). Geographer David Harvey has claimed institutions such as NGOs not only act as a replacement but actually accelerate state withdrawal from social provision, thereby functioning as 'Trojan horses' for global neoliberalism (2006: 52). However, after conducting a three-month empirical case study with Coexist, Larner argues that grassroots organisations such as Coexist do not foster the kind of individualised, resilient subject that emerges from a lack of state support and precarious economic existence. Nor do Coexist represent the privatised, depoliticised entrepreneurs of economic government. Instead Coexist enable the emergence of new resilient, self-sustaining and empowered subjects that has been documented in wider studies on alternative and non-capitalist practice (Gibson-Graham, 1996; Cornwell, 2012). Far from being depoliticised or acquiescent to the neoliberal status quo, they explicitly engage with new forms of self-organising with the intention of changing the current social and political paradigm. The resilience displayed is one that privileges relationality, networks and collaboration, understanding that one can engage with higher institutions and authorities such as councils or universities, while still creating *pockets of resistance* (Mittleman & Chin, 2000; Erdem, 2012) or *spaces of possibility* (Cornwell, 2012).

Regulation

In this doctoral research project, I foreground "regulation" as a means to interrogate the moments when Coexist encounter tensions in their everyday practice. It is during regulatory processes - decision-making, critical reflection, and public engagement - where either new possibilities or restrictions to Coexist's practice manifest. However, this highlights one of the key tensions I engage with in this thesis: the pressure of performing to an economically viable business model can easily lead grassroots organisations to reaffirm the same conventional business practices they first set out to challenge. It is a well-acknowledged risk that, in their quest for economic sustainability, alternative and non-capitalist organisations will often adopt the 'familiar path from charisma to regularised routine, from inventiveness and passion to bureaucracy, hierarchy, and instrumental reason' (Walker, 1994: 141). This process is often referred to as

institutionalisation, in which a collective's initial visions and principles are co-opted by the demands of working within an official capacity (Pruijt, 2003; DeFilippis, 2004). For this reason, many radical groups and squatter movements have adopted the slogan 'you cannot rent your way out of a social relation' (Chatterton & Pickerill, 2006), referring to inherent power relations and restrictions of legally renting space. Yet the purpose of this doctoral research project is not to perpetuate suspicious attitudes that frame any official, functioning organisation as always-already co-opted or capitalism in another guise (Gibson-Graham, 2008). I contend that what is at stake is not whether an organisation *should* prioritise economic sustainability but *how* can an organisation achieve economic sustainability and growth, without betraying their initial purpose and vision (May, 2010; Cornwell, 2012).

To assist my coproduced research with Coexist, I engaged with the diverse economies literature in geography. The diverse economies approach combines post-structuralist, feminist and queer theory in its analysis of alternative economic practices, seeking new ways to frame and politically situate these practices. Writ large, this literature affirms a relational view of the economy in which capitalism is just one element in an interwoven set of economic practices (Gibson-Graham, 1996; 2006; 2008; 2010; Materman-Smith, 2000; Oberhauser, 2005; Smith & Stenning, 2006; McKinnon, 2010; Wright, 2010; Cornwell, 2012; Erdem, 2014). A relational perspective of the economy rejects reductive binary thinking that only considers organisations as either capitalist or anti-capitalist. Instead, research can account for organisations that, like Coexist, practice more complex forms of resistance and transformation, and do not necessarily adopt a militantly oppositional or non-hierarchical approach to practice (Chatterton & Pickerill, 2006; Erdem, 2012). It is common for action research case studies within the diverse economies literature to engage directly with the regulatory practices of grassroots organisations. Case studies have revealed how grassroots organisations and alternative economic practice still contend with the same issues that conventional or big business come into conflict with. Studies have exposed gender inequality (Oberhauser, 2005; Gregson & Rose, 2000), labour exploitation (Samers, 2005; Smith & Stenning, 2006) and racial-class privilege being prevalent (Hodkinson & Chatterton, 2007; Hanson & Blake, 2009). Working alongside organisations on the ground, researchers can help grassroots organisations confront and overcome everyday social tensions and political issues. Action research engages these everyday tensions with academic theory, as an iterative process of action and reflection, theory and practice. In this respect, the coproduced research project with Coexist was an attempt to articulate theoretical frameworks and shape the research practice to support their work in affecting positive social change (Brydon-Miller et al, 2003).

Ethical Approach to Arts Practice

A practice-as-research approach was implemented for this doctoral research project. I wanted to utilise arts practice to create *spaces of dissent*, so that Coexist could experiment with how they exist in different kinds of spaces. I argue that arts practice can allow Coexist to experiment with more transient spatial disruptions. In the same way that the actions of anarchist groups, protests and occupations can get us to reconsider reality, art can generate ruptures from habitual ways of thinking and being (Phelan, 1993; O'Sullivan, 2006; Grosz, 2008). The way in which art creates a rupture has been theoretically situated as producing *encounters*. The term encounter is used to describe the moment when 'something in the world forces us to think; something that is an object not of recognition but of a fundamental *encounter*' (Deleuze, 1994: 139). *Encounters* are different from acts of *representation* because they exist outside the everyday roles and dominant social orders. Representation refers to the order of the world and our normative systems of knowledge. Thus, whereas representation demands recognition – the act of being *represented* something – an encounter makes no reference to a copy, instead it derives its force from the way it disrupts our habitual ways of being and acting in the world and forces us to consider what else is possible (O'Sullivan, 2006). An encounter, therefore, contains two moments, both a disruptive moment and a creative moment. The disruptive moment is how an encounter produces a rupture from the everyday. The creative moment is the affirmation of a 'new world, a way of seeing and thinking this world differently' (ibid: 1). If an encounter is constituted by both a rupture and affirmation, it is consequently only fleeting; the creativity arises at the same time as a disruptive moment. Therefore, the egalitarian potential an encounter holds is not something that can be sustained over time; in the same way a 'performance's only life is in the present' (Phelan, 1993: 146).

The impetus to construct encounters with a grassroots organisation through arts practice can also be understood as an ethical practice. In encouraging encounters there is a commitment to creativity and experimentation occurring alongside everyday practice. Encounters are a prominent conceptual component within the body of work of Gilles Deleuze, who elevates a notion of *difference* in place of political ideologies and transcendental moral frameworks. The political philosopher Todd May affirms that the ethical question of 'how might one live' permeates the oeuvre of post-structuralist Gilles Deleuze, both individually and in collaboration with Felix Guattari (May, 2005). The question 'how might one live' arises in the wake of Nietzsche announcing the death of God and thus jettisoning the transcendent foundation of Judeo-Christian morality (Jun, 2011b). Therefore, rather than asking the question *how should one live?* or *how should one act?*, each of which rely on moral norms, the question of *how might one live?* is one based in 'immanent modes of existence' (Deleuze, 1988: 23). It is not a question of moral judgment or political ideology that is being presented but instead an approach to experimental practice.

In understanding ethics as an experiential practice that encourages experimenting with new ways of thinking and experiencing the world, Deleuze has been described as formulating a 'neo-Spinozian' set of ethics (Braidotti, 2013). The writings of Deleuze owe a large debt to the work of 17th Century Dutch philosopher Baruch Spinoza, who wrote extensively on ethics. We can situate the ethical question of *how might one live?* as a variation of Spinoza's question *what can this body do?* (Deleuze, 1988). Spinoza's ethics countered the Cartesian separation between mind and body; similarly, Deleuze deliberately decentres the human subject to enable experimentation and new assemblages. This decentering of the human subject happens throughout the two volumes of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1983; 1987), which Deleuze wrote with Felix Guattari. For instance, the term 'Body-without-Organs'¹ is implemented to consider 'how can we unhook ourselves from the points of subjectification that secure us, nail us down to a dominant reality?' (1987: 186). Deleuze and Guattari implement the term to move away from the privileging of human experience as the basis of living and instead move into a world of forces or "affects". Correspondingly, within the ethical question of *how might one live?* the *one* need not mean a person but could mean a 'mouth, a gesture, a style, a relationship... a group, an epoch' (May, 2005: 24). By de-privileging the human subject from its former association with a true and superior perspective of the world, we are better able to disrupt representational modes of thought and consider what else is possible.

Deleuzian ethics can be viewed as both critical and constructive in that it moves away from essences and identities, while also enabling productive encounters and the emergence of something new. The concept of 'becoming' addresses this process, in which life is considered immanent, unfolding and thus open to new relations and trajectories. It is for this reason that the transformative potential embedded within Deleuzian ethics has been taken up in feminist studies (Braidotti, 1994; Grosz, 1994; Colebrook & Buchanan, 2000), alternative economic studies (Gibson-Graham, 2006; Purcell & Born, 2016), media studies (Coleman 2008; Barker, 2009) and education studies (Ringrose, 2011; Renold & Ringrose, 2011; Lambert et al, 2015). Tellingly, the value of Deleuzian ethics to destabilize normative ideas is well established; the purpose is not to find a permanent solution but instead to throw fireworks into the everyday (Thrift, 2008). Yet, despite this attribute of enabling openings, there are still questions as to whether Deleuzian ethics can be implemented in a more sustained approach amongst grassroots practices on the ground. The risks of such an approach is recognised even amongst proponents of Deleuzian ethics, who admit that the dense complicated texts could at best be a 'harmless fetish' amongst academics or at worse a 'vanguardist discourse' (Jun, 2011a: 3). For, while experimentation is novel there is perhaps not an explicit enough

¹ The term Body-without-Organs is derived from Antonin Artaud's use of the term in *To Have Done With The Judgement Of God*. Artaud is also the source of inspiration for Deleuze and Guattari's inclusion of schizophrenia (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987).

outline of what constitutes 'joyful' encounters against negative encounters (May, 1994)². Furthermore, we need to engage seriously with the question of what risks – potentially dangerous or life-threatening – does a commitment to experimentation create? (Cull, 2011). But then these are risks that the theorists address within their own texts:

If you free it with too violent an action, if you blow apart the strata without taking precautions, then instead of drawing the plane you will be killed, plunged into a black hole, or even dragged toward catastrophe. Staying stratified – organised, signified, subjected – is not the worst that can happen.

(Deleuze & Guattari, 1987: 187)

With this statement, Deleuze and Guattari are elevating the importance of experimentation but only within reason. A deliberate abandonment of anything stable or familiar would certainly be debilitating. This understanding of experimentation is therefore valuable to grassroots organisations that are attempting to introduce to ways of existing while also sustaining an economically viable structure.

In simpler terms, one can understand a commitment to experimentation as being “embodied” in the diverse economies approach. Gibson-Graham stated that what motivated their initial book *‘The End of Capitalism (As we knew it)’* in 1996 was to create new possibilities of viewing economic practice and to escape the restrictions of Marxist philosophy. Karl Marx famously stated that *to change the world, we must first understand the world*. Gibson-Graham, however, argue that *to change the world, we must first change our understandings of the world* (Gibson-Graham, 1996). The ethical question *how might one live* embodies the same dissatisfaction with inadequate modes of thinking. More recently, the diverse economies literature urges case studies to consider theories of affect and post-humanist discourses (Gibson-Graham & Roelvink, 2010; McKinnon, 2010). Encouraging new perspectives and lenses is a way of more adequately engaging with the world and of interrogating the less easily perceived aspects embedded within social tensions and political issues. The impetus is to be better equipped at affecting positive change in the world.

The way in which I implemented film within my practice-as-research project follows the ethical question of *how might one live*; affecting change by creating new ways of understanding the world. I am asking critically rigorous questions of Coexists’ everyday practice by thinking *through* film. An emphasis

² One can identify a significant development in May’s attitude toward the Deleuze’s emphasis on experimentation and difference between 1994’s *Toward a Poststructuralist Anarchism* and 2005’s *Deleuze: An Introduction*

on creativity and experimentation encourages an iterative approach to theory and practice. Specifically, Deleuze states that, rather than theory being positioned as a reflection on practice or the inspiration for practice, instead 'theory is a relay from one practice to another' just as 'practice is a set of relays from one theoretical point to another'; therefore theory is in itself practice; one that is local and regional rather than totalising (Foucault & Deleuze, 1977: 206). Deleuze also claims that if theory be considered a box of tools or even a pair of spectacles, then when a particular theoretical lens does not suit a given situation, we are encouraged to find another (ibid). This does not imply only that we should avoid becoming over reliant on dominant and inadequate systems of knowledge to understand the world, but rather that we should actively affect our understandings of the world through creativity and experimentation. To consider what else is possible – how might one live - one must first escape the restrictions of existing discourse and knowledge. After all, future possibilities are connected - not separate - to how we currently experience the world (May, 2005).

Coproduction

The Productive Margins was formed in the belief that the people and communities excluded from participating in the regulatory regimes that impact upon their daily lives have the expertise and experiential knowledge to be politically productive. The Productive Margins' mission statement is that these regimes can be redesigned and harnessed for engagement, ensuring communities at the margins are engaged in regulatory processes and practices. The challenge is therefore to experiment with new systems of engagement that enable creativity and increase agency. One of the selected themes the research programme set out to explore was *spaces of dissent*. Approaching engagement through notions of *dissent* accords with critical theorists that contest that any attempt to pull together different community groups and individuals into a unitary space of consensus will simply reaffirm wider societal hierarchies and social exclusion (Fraser, 1990; Warner, 2002). Furthermore, literature in geography emphasises the potential in exploring disagreements between groups as providing a basis for connection, while elevating the value of political agonism over consensus (Amin & Thrift, 2005; Barnes & Sheppard, 2009; Staeheli, 2010).

This thesis surveys several artistic interventions coproduced between the University of Bristol and the participating community partner Coexist, as a means to confront and interrogate the organisation's own regulatory systems. Coexist aim to create spaces where individuals and groups of people can coexist with themselves, with each other and the environment. Foregrounding dissent as a form of engagement presented a new trajectory within the organisation's regulatory processes. The decision to coproduce more creative spaces of engagement formed through dissent was viewed as a way of offering balance to Coexist's other

spaces of engagement, where more structured and solution-focused decision-making is required. What became apparent was the importance of diversifying spaces of engagement within most organisations, but particularly more socially engaged projects that prioritise engaging with diverse stakeholders in an attempt to facilitate coexistence. There is a risk within projects with egalitarian ambitions that - in the desire to create a space for 'everybody' and 'celebrate difference' - projects neglect to address inherent power relations that make this vision potentially unachievable. There is often not the adequate space or mechanisms in place to enable the kind of critical engagement needed. Thinking through notions of dissent is a conscious effort to address issues of privilege, disagreement and the more difficult aspects of socially engaged work.

A distinguishing feature of our coproduced project was the desire to articulate dissent as a series of embodied acts. With this notion, dissent is not understood only as expression of resistance voiced through language but an opportunity to reconfigure how bodies relate to one another and their material environment. What was at stake is that we did not merely want to expand *who* Coexist engages with but experiment with *how* Coexist exists in different spaces. In other words, the impetus was not to *increase* but *diversify* spaces of engagement; to see what new social relations might be formed. Dissent is therefore imbued with a transformative potential: disrupting habitual ways of existing in space with the possibility of discovering something new. This transformative potential is further inflected by the decision to experiment with arts practice. The Productive Margins aligns with more recent critical trajectories in the social sciences, where arts practice is not understood only as a knowledge-*communicating* but also a knowledge-*generating* practice. With our coproduced project, we harnessed the unique capacities of arts practice to create spaces of dissent in the form of transient spatial disruptions. This included street art, social sculpture, film, immersive installations and live performances. We were thinking with notions of dissent *through* arts practice, realising that art can generate ephemeral ruptures from everyday ways of thinking and being (Phelan, 1993; O'Sullivan, 2006; Grosz, 2008). The aim was to create spaces of dissent where a 'new world, a way of seeing and thinking this world differently' could emerge (O'Sullivan, 2006:1).

Evolution of Coproduction

Over the course of three years we facilitated a series of events experimenting with the malleable theme of *spaces of dissent*. It was conducted as an iterative process of action and reflection; thinking with theory through practice; continuously developing our approach to enable new ideas, social relations and possibilities to emerge. While the actions did not always follow a linear line of progression, it is possible

to demarcate three distinct phases within the development of our project. Within our first phase we were motivated by the relatively simple desire to act. We wanted to make *public* interventions as a means of experimenting with the notion of *engagement through dissent*. In doing so, we were able to explore how Coexist might exist in spaces away from the Hamilton House building. The propensity of Coexist to follow an action-led process of experimentation was indicative of a grassroots mentality. Moreover, it was a crucial juncture during the project's inception, with Coexist gently pushing at the boundaries of what might constitute or qualify as research, while negotiating how much influence they were entitled to as community partners within the coproduced research.

Adopting an action-led approach grounded the coproduced research within the everyday dynamics and rhythms of Coexist's environment. Our first intervention enabled us to immediately confront pertinent questions concerning the power relations embedded within acts of public engagement: Why should *Coexist* facilitate public interventions; how would the parameters of *dissent* be set; and *who* would be engaging *whom*? The first significant intervention came in the form of a Candy Chang inspired sticker installation '*I wish this was...*' (2014). Candy Chang has produced a series of interactive public interventions in which participants are encouraged to respond to a provocative question. Using a template available on Candy Chang's website, we created an installation against a Grade II listed building, a few buildings down from Hamilton House. The installation engaged with a contentious issue regarding the future of this vacant, derelict building. There had been a proliferation of rumours that the building was to be converted by a London-based property developer into a block of luxury flats. The installation stimulated participation by leaving pens available next to the provocative questions '*I wish this was...*'

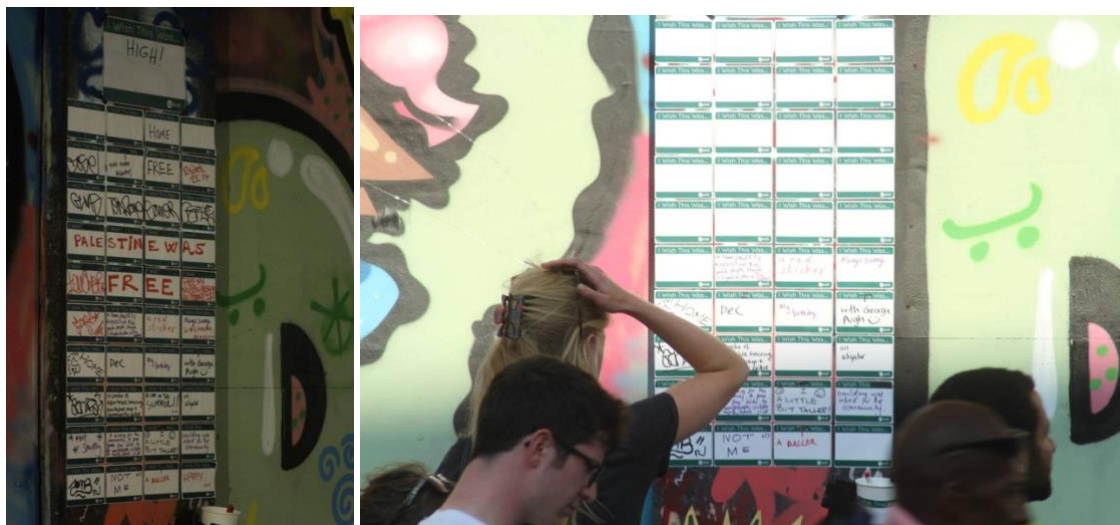


Figure 0.4 Sticker Installation 2014 - Carriage Works, Bristol

To what extent dissent can be facilitated or contained was foregrounded during the sticker installation by participants' readiness to alter the parameters of dissent, whether changing the questions written on the stickers or extending their contributions outside the set boundaries of individual stickers. We learned that while we can set the initial parameters for dissent, there must be space for something more. Engagement can be produced through a notion of dissent but who possesses or owns this engagement is not fixed. This was expressed with how other people, not known to us or related to the coproduced project, sustained the site - removing pens and cups once all the stickers had been filled. We were also challenged by members of the public when we began taking down the installation. On two separate occasions we were told we should be leaving the installation in place. One of our team suggested it was OK that we were taking the installation down because we were the ones who placed the stickers there in the first place, unconsciously qualifying his actions through a claim to ownership. The response from the passer-by was simple but clear: 'yes, but we like it being there'. The installation – or space of dissent – had become a microcosm for much larger social actions. The situation reaffirmed the role of facilitators, how something grows beyond that of those who 'manage' or 'own' space. The facilitators might agitate a social situation but the direction in which it develops is determined by those who participate. The specific public intervention echoes wider ethical questions regarding the project set-up at Hamilton House, namely, who 'owns' it once a project is set in motion? Does control still lie with the property developers Connolly & Callaghan who own the physical structure? Coexist who set the spark, adapted and reacted to changes made? Or the people who frequently use the space and participate as part of the Hamilton House community.

Once we established an action-led approach, we entered the second phase of the project, where Coexist as an entity came under closer scrutiny. We wanted to explore how engagement through dissent could be integrated within Coexist's everyday regulatory processes. Moreover, how arts practice would sit alongside Coexist's more discursive practices. As we began focusing directly upon Coexist, we began explicitly encouraging dissent toward different aspects of the project. If our first phase demonstrated members of Coexist testing the coproduction relationship, this second phase therefore represented a counter proposition; testing to what extent Coexist were willing to welcome challenges to their own practice. The critical interrogation of Coexist's practice would range from scrutinizing their governance structure and decision-making processes, to more conceptual consideration of the function Coexist perform within society. Some Coexist team members were left cold by this approach, finding critical reflection to be an unwelcome hindrance to the project's growth and evolution. While it was only a small minority that were unenthused, it was enough to make myself question my own role as a researcher entering into an organisation and directly impacting upon everyday practice. I had to consider my own ethical responsibility against academic intrigue. It was my contention that we would limit the scope of the research if we were

not prepared to interrogate the *nitty-gritty* of grassroots actions, including the more problematic aspects. Eventually, I was reassured to continue with our trajectory by other team members expressing their avid enthusiasm to embrace dissent within the project. To avoid unnecessary friction or interference, a working group was formed between me and four Coexist team members. This enabled us to continue the project while not interfering with the Coexist team members who were less keen to participate.

The third and final this phase of the project's development was the most critical because it was when we negotiated as a team how a *practice-as-research* approach could compliment *coproduction*. The Coexist team contains expert facilitators, well experienced in leading groups to explore social tensions. Initially, our *spaces of dissent* project was formed as a series of workshops, in which we would invite other community groups and stakeholders to engage with pressing social tensions. Artistic creations would then be produced by attendees during the workshops. However, after hosting three workshops, with participants invited from other organisations, we realised the workshop format was too rigid, limiting the transformative potential of arts practice. The very nature of *hosting* spaces of dissent became a logistical strain. Working around the community partner's normal hours, we would have to find a compatible date; enlist an appropriate mixture of participants; set discussion points; design exercises; acquire the correct resources; and ensure those invited would turn up. Ultimately, by starting with a workshop structure, we created a situation in which there was less ability to experiment with how we approach social issues. It also left no space to experiment with how Coexist exist in different spaces because they were restricted within their role as hosts. The coproduction became too focused on coordinating community engagement rather than enable more ambitious critical reflection.

We eventually prioritised engaging with social tensions by thinking through arts practice as the first step in our engagement process. The practice-as-research approach enabled more radical interventions, where Coexist could experiment with how they encounter social issues. Our process now began with artistic interventions and creation, which then led into workshops with external partners and stakeholders. Through this decision, *regulating engagement through dissent* became a Coexist strategy that was driven by artistic practice. We would begin our process by engaging with a designated social tension through arts practice; thinking with theory through art as a means of enabling new ways of encountering everyday situations. After this, we would then integrate what was experienced directly into Coexist's regulatory spaces, holding two-hour workshops where team members, building-users and other relevant community organisations would attend. We facilitated and publicised our series of interventions under the title 'Spaces of Dissent'. What was most significant regarding the coproduction process, was that it was only possible to introduce a practice-as-research approach once we had achieved a shared vision – or memorandum of understanding –

between the community partner and me. We had nurtured a sense of trust and understanding throughout the coproduced research project. It was only through building a strong relationship – and slowly developing our project over time - that it was possible to incorporate more theoretical lenses that often differed with the community partner's own approach or set of ideas.

Creative Biography

When introducing myself at workshops or to potential new collaborators, I will usually introduce myself as a filmmaker. Yet film is really only one component of my approach. I facilitate creative interventions that combine various forms of arts practice: street art, social sculpture; live performance; photography; and immersive installation. Utilising various forms of arts practice is indicative of the coproduction process that defines this doctoral research project. The community partner Coexist is made up of various kinds of facilitators and artists, many of whom are more familiar with theatre-based practices rather than digital media. The way in which we first began implementing film was more akin to how one might devise a theatre piece rather than storyboard a film. I would often film situations or events, unsure of what would eventually be produced. The raw footage from these filming sessions would then be developed, added to and defined within the editing process.

In many ways, the kind of films we coproduced during the doctoral research project represents a full-circle return for my own filmmaking journey. I first began using film as a form of research and development while studying Art at foundation level and then later drama at undergraduate. I made my first film when studying the work of Henri Matisse, particularly concerned with how he could evoke movement and liveness through his paintings and line drawings. The film I made was an attempt to express movement in the same manner as movement is expressed within Henri Matisse's 1910 painting *Dance*, in which five figures dance in a circle. I had found a large, discarded large convex mirror in the street – the kind one sees in supermarkets for security guards to look around corners, to stealthily monitor customers. I inverted the mirror so that it was concave and would heavily distort whatever it reflected. I gathered a group of students together and orchestrated them to dance around the mirror while draped in white robes. I filmed their elongated and refracted reflections through the mirror. The footage was slowed down

and finally presented as an installation. The film explored how movement could be presented on screen. Moreover, how distortion could actually enable a more affecting presentation of our social world than more conventional representations.

It was only when studying an MA in Film and Television Production that I began learning conventional film techniques and started producing narrative short films. Up until then, I had continued to adopt more experimental approaches to film while studying drama at undergraduate level; integrating film projections with physical theatre pieces I directed. In the few years between my MA and the PhD, I formed two independent film companies with filmmaking peers and began producing short films. While I adopted multiple production and technical roles, my most developed role was in field recording and sound design. Being involved with post-production affords a different dynamic to other crew roles. There is more space to be creative and experimental than a film shoot, which requires meticulous pre-production planning. Eventually I decided I wanted to move into a much more creative field of film production. It is for this reason I contacted Knowle West Media Centre, a community group based in Bristol, who approach engagement through digital media partners. I enquired about potential opportunities and they directed me toward the PhD with the Productive Margins, in which they themselves were participating.

Why I still frame myself as a filmmaker – and why three films are the submitted artistic creation accompanying this thesis – is that I find films can both document events while also alluding towards excessive moments, not so easily *captured*. It is for this reason I consider the films produced during the projects as functioning as *expressive artefacts*. There is a deliberate attempt to use film's nascent documentative quality yet to imbue this with a sense of *liveness*. It is more common for a sense of liveness to be present in artistic or experimental film as opposed to conventional documentary or cinema. Generating a sense of liveness through my approach to filmmaking – the *doing* of the practice – is very much influenced by first learning film craft through an art and theatre lens.

Structure

The following thesis is written with a mixture of intended audiences. As a doctoral research project, the thesis is an integral component in surveying and justifying the research that happened over the course of three years. Yet as a coproduced research project, I have ensured that the thesis is also valuable to the community partner Coexist: their team members, building-users and stakeholders. The structure of the thesis follows the development and progression of the coproduced practice-as-research approach adopted. Specifically, it begins with how the approach to filmmaking was in part inspired by Coexist's own use of embodied facilitation. The thesis then progresses through three films, surveying how we iteratively developed our approach, first experimenting with film as an additional space of engagement until eventually establishing the approach as an internal strategy for engagement (See Appendix III).

The structure of the thesis is guided by the practical component of this doctoral research project, but editing what content to include was difficult given the sheer volume of interactions that occurred across the three years as an embedded researcher (See Appendix VII – Table of Activities). The thesis has been through several significant edits, which has ultimately reduced the presence of the community partner. To enable a clear theoretical thread there is less documentation of myriad meetings, creative planning sessions, workshops and exhibitions held with Coexist team members. Coproduced research affirms that community partners are engaged throughout the research process: co-designing; co-developing; and co-delivering the final research project. While this thesis is unable to account for the considerable hours that have been committed into delivering this project, I hope that this thesis elucidates the key moments in which the community partner shaped and directed what was produced.

The structure of this thesis is as follows. In Chapter One I explain how my theoretical lens and approach to film was influenced by Coexist's own practice, specifically their use of embodied facilitation. Through my participation as an embedded researcher, attending weekly meetings, strategy days and assisting with other team activities, I identified the need to help diversify the kind of spaces of engagement that the Coexist team were using. Capacity issues had led to the team not having enough access to spaces of critical reflection. I wanted to generate more spaces of engagement through film practice. I had decided that film practice could produce the same kind of encounters generated by Coexist's use of embodied facilitation. In the Chapter I engage literature that situates embodied facilitation as a radical practice. I delve further by specifically analysing the *affective relations of vulnerability* that are generated during embodied facilitation, arguing that these same kinds of relations are a central aspect of radical protest and other spaces of dissent. During the remaining chapters of the thesis I elucidate how I aimed to generate affective relations

of vulnerability through film practice. Each chapter focuses on one film, setting up the context each film was made within; surveying the specific body of theory I was thinking with through film; and analysing the execution.

In Chapter Two I analyse how affective relations of vulnerability can be generated by film through the notion of *haptic visuality*. This term haptic visuality denotes a kind of film-viewing experience that foregrounds the tactile, thus provoking embodied sensations in the viewer. It emerges when viewers are presented with *haptic images* on the screen - images that are blurry, grainy, or indistinct. The distorted images obscures the viewer's ability to interpret meaning through conventional film language. Knowledge is not attained by what is represented on the screen, instead the viewer must call upon her own memories, ideas and thoughts, contributing her own meaning to the film. Haptic visuality therefore reconfigures how one can understand the epistemology and ontology of the film viewing experience. In this chapter I analyse how I experimented with haptic visuality while making the film *Keyhole Whispers* (2015). The film was an opportunity to scrutinize the more discrete moments embedded within Coexist's decision-making practices, with particular focus on the micro-power relations embedded in dominant discourse and systems of knowledge.

In Chapter Three I unpack the way we coproduced the film *Conversations in Neon* (2016) as a means of engaging with the virtual and emergent aspects of gentrification in Stokes Croft. The 'virtual' was conceptualised by author Marcel Proust as a way of signifying those aspects of life that are not actual - they do not have a material presence – yet are nonetheless real (Shields, 2003). An expanded empiricism that addresses the virtual significantly alters how we position our existence and the spaces we move through. In this sense, space is not a fixed present but rather a continually unfolding *ecology* - where virtual and material relations combine (Papadopoulos, 2010; Park et al, 2011). The film *Conversations in Neon* (2016) was made to reconfigure ideas of causality in line with this thinking, and also to move beyond thinking of Stokes Croft as an empty space filled with distinct individuals, groups and organisations, and instead consider it as an unfolding ecology. I argue that the value of this kind of engagement with the gentrification phenomena is that it enables new ways of thinking and acting for Coexist within their regulatory processes; a more vulnerable form of engagement. The coproduction of this film also enabled us to experiment with how Coexist exist in spaces away from the Hamilton House building. This happened through facilitating a social sculpture in a contested public space - the Bearpit - in central Bristol.

In the final chapter I focus on how aspects of temporality can be emphasised through the use of *irrational cuts* as an approach to film editing. Rational cuts are when images are cut together to construct a

false continuity between shots, that contribute to the development of the film as a whole. Irrational cuts means rather than having 'one image *after* the other, there is one image *plus* another'; meaning individual shots do not serve an overarching whole (Deleuze, 2013: 220). In this chapter I analyse how I initially applied the notion of irrational cuts while making the film *Fragment/Sustain* (2017). We then extended this concept beyond the screen and experimenting with how it can be applied through immersive arts practice - for which we adopted a *track lines* approach, created by Coexist director Daniel Balla. These final workshops and film practice occurred at a time when Coexist were under threat of eviction and were compiling a proposal to purchase the Hamilton House building. Ideas of transience and sustainability that first provoked the trajectory of our coproduced research project were thrown into sharp focus in the face of possible eviction. The chapter demonstrates why, especially in times of economic pressure and a lack of capacity, more experimental and critically reflexive spaces are integral for grassroots organisations in their quest for a sustainable existence.

Instructions for Watching Films

There are three coproduced films that accompany this thesis. These can be found on an accompanying digital device. Please watch the films when instructed during the thesis [See Section 2.3 Tactile Disjunctures in Film: *Keyhole Whispers* (2015); Section 3.3 Reconfiguring Space as an Ecology of Affect through Film: *Conversations in Neon* (2016); Section 4.2 Assemblages in Film: *Fragment/Sustain* (2017)]



Keyhole Whispers (2015)



Conversations in Neon (2016)



Fragment/Sustain (2017)

Figure 0.5 Composition of screenshots taken from three coproduced films

CHAPTER ONE

FACILITATING EMBODIED ENCOUNTERS AND AFFECTIVE RELATIONS OF VULNERABILITY

‘Our hands are inches apart. I watch them slowly rise and fall, always remaining equidistant. My eyes flicker to watch my partner, they in turn catch my eye. I hear my breath draw in. Before I can consider where else I might look I sense my leg moving forward and theirs back, always maintaining an equal distance. I am unsure if I initiated this movement or if they did.’

(Field Notes, Vision Day, October 2015)

Introduction

The extract above documents my experience of a facilitation exercise held by the Coexist team, in which participants act in pairs, mirroring one another’s movements without affording either partner the responsibility of leading the action. Instead participants must engage with micro-sensations within both their own body and their partner’s body; sensing one another’s movements, while also remaining aware to the other bodies moving in the space to avoid any potential collisions. The exercise requires participants to embrace being-in-space. Encountering both our own bodies and the material surroundings in this way has been described within feminist existential phenomenology as a ‘bottom-up’ emergence of aesthetic and ethical sense (Sobchack, 2004). It is an unfolding embodied experience that resists historical and social

codifications or ideologies. This language of 'bottom-up' is useful when considering the processes of institutionalisation and tensions surrounding top-down governance structures, because it shifts the focus from not only *who* participates and *who* is represented but also *how* we participate and *how* we encounter one another.

This chapter attends to Coexist's implementation of embodied facilitation within their everyday practice as a means to interrogate the complex forms of resistance and transformation that exist within alternative and non-capitalist organisations. It has been argued that research must account for organisations that, like Coexist, do not adopt a militantly oppositional or non-hierarchical approach to practice (Chatterton & Pickerill, 2006; Erdem, 2012). Furthermore, that research must move beyond propagating the use of specific models, blueprints or governance structures (Amin & Thrift, 2002) and avoid the claimed *fetishization* of process (Lance, 2005; Harvey, 2015). An alternative approach proposed is to instead consider the role of affect (Gibson-Graham & Roelvink, 2010). Affect refers to the capacity to act and be acted upon; it attends to discrete moments of change (Seigworth & Gregg, 2010). Theories of affect engage with how new relations and trajectories unfold at a pre-personal level through encounters between human, non-human and material entities. Signalling the points of touch and interface between differently situated bodies, embodied practice signifies a point of convergence between academia and activists on the ground; a shared recognition of the transformative potential of the body. This recognition emerges from a heightened awareness of how new capitalist practices operate through fields of affect, meaning 'capitalism can play much closer to the skin' (Thrift, 2008: 32). Accordingly, practitioners of embodied facilitation affirm that capitalist values of competition and exploitation can affect feelings of anxiety, fear and paranoia upon individual bodies (Goia, 2008). This is exacerbated by state discourses that place responsibility on the individual to improve their own wellbeing and maintain 'resilience', thereby reinforcing a society of narcissistic, de-politicised and compliant subjects (Firth, 2016). In response, embodied facilitation aims to construct new affective relations both between participants and also between participants and their material environment. Encouraging participants to (re)engage with their bodies through physical exercises, somatic practices such as embodied facilitation enable the disruption of dominant discourses and systems of knowledge (Ogo & Dejerck, 2008; Goia, 2008; Firth, 2016). In disrupting discourses and cultivating bodily awareness it is then possible to access those experiences of the world that are at the edge of thought; the felt experiences of existence (Harrison, 2000). It is here that non-hierarchical social relations can be formed and there is the potential to construct new ways of thinking and experiencing the world. Considering the mechanisms and intentions embedded within embodied facilitation, this practice can be named a form of micro-political activism.

This chapter firstly outlines where embodied facilitation sits within Coexist's everyday practice; how it functions within Coexist's regulatory processes; and, moreover, how processes of institutionalisation risk misconstruing this kind of practice as an indulgence or even a hindrance. In Section 1.1 I analyse Coexist's decision-making processes, observing the tensions that have arisen through a lack of capacity amongst the team and how this connects with aspects of institutionalisation. In the following section I expand upon my initial engagement with Coexist's implementation of embodied facilitation within their everyday practice; why this can be considered a form of micro-political activism; and furthermore, to what extent *affective relations of vulnerability* are key to this process. I substantiate the presence and importance of affective relations of vulnerability by surveying a form of embodied facilitation praxis called *soma therapy* and then coalescing this body of work with recent interrogation of the term vulnerability in critical theory (Section 1.3). Here I argue that embodied facilitation resonates with conversations in academia that reconfigure the term vulnerability from implying weakness to instead offering the potential for resistance and transformation. Vulnerability has been considered as a receptive, susceptible and affirmative state incipient to action within non-representational theory (Harrison, 2008). In queer theory vulnerability is emphasised as offering the potential for radical transformations by associating it with acts of resistance and bodily alliances between individuals living through economic precarity (Butler, 2015). In reaffirming this theoretical position within this chapter, I set up the impetus of my practice in the remaining chapters: considering how affective relations of vulnerability might be realised through the creation of new filmic spaces, thus diversifying the spaces of engagement with Coexist's regulatory processes.

1.1 Diversifying Spaces of Engagement

A three-year residency working as an 'in-house researcher' enabled me to develop a perspective of Coexist's organisational practice that not only accounts for their formal structure and their stated ambitions but of the many other tacit practices required within grassroots action: the emotional investments and conflicting intentions; the manic and idealistic optimism; the self-exploitation and inevitable burn-outs; the high turnover between those who blossom and others who outgrow; the evolving attitudes, new knowledges and dominant discourses; the haphazard and chaotic assemblages clashing with the formalised and legal obligations. Coexist as an organisation embody and evoke all the troubles, tensions and conflicts that anything close to 'coexistence' will inevitably necessitate. During their more formative years Coexist were able to maintain most of their egalitarian ideals; the stated intention to 'respond to the callings of the community'³ was easier to practise when they had an excess of space waiting to be utilised. In more recent

³ Coexist Approach document. See Appendix I

years as activities and users of the space have increased so too have the responsibilities the core Coexist team find themselves holding.

To enable the Hamilton House building to function at its most efficient and economically viable level, organisational practices have been streamlined with the incorporation of a larger core team and separate departments, with each person holding more distinct job roles and responsibilities. The boundaries between Coexist and the licensees renting space have become less amorphous and reflect a more conventional customer-provider relationship. The ongoing tension of attempting to be dynamic and adaptive yet also economically viable and efficient, manifests in different areas of practice. The ossification of roles and responsibilities has made it harder for the team to respond to developing issues and tensions that surround the building, such as gentrification; exclusion; diversity; and regulation of space. The more structured and restricted practice the collective engage in compared to when they first formed is understood by some Coexist members as an inevitable phase of any organisation. The process of 'Forming, Storming, Norming, Performing'⁴ has been quoted to me on several occasions. However, other team members have suggested they would prefer to see the collective perform 'more radically and shut down next year' rather than plateau for the next twenty years (Weekly meeting, Field Notes:22/05/15). It was through evaluating Coexist's current regulatory processes and governance structure that I began considering how it might be possible to use film as a space that could fulfil some of the more experimental and non-hierarchical forms of engagement.

Within Coexist's current operations a flat-hierarchical governance structure with transparent decision-making is the explicit model in play. There is a meeting held for the Board of Directors and a weekly operational team meeting. The directors meeting is made up of directors from the Coexist team and non-executive directors invited from relevant areas of expertise, usually with one member representing the licensees in the building. All team members are invited to attend the weekly operational meeting. The process should be that before the board make a decision on an issue, this should have been discussed and given approval by the wider Coexist team. The implication is that while specific job roles will hold certain responsibilities and have a degree of autonomy in how they approach tasks in their own department, there will also be an opportunity for all team members to voice any concern or objections before a decision is finalised. This often entails an individual or department raising a point on the weekly agenda, informing the wider team of proposed actions, and inviting feedback. In the past, when certain larger topics or pressing

⁴ Psychologist Bruce Tuckman first came up with the phrase "forming, storming, norming, and performing" in his 1965 article, "De-velopmental Sequence in Small Groups." He used it to describe the path that most teams follow on their way to high performance.

social issues have required further reflection, Coexist have constructed additional ad-hoc meetings in which they implement embodied facilitation techniques to engage with these issues. These might take the form of extended weekly meetings, strategy days or annual vision days⁵. Throughout all these processes, consistent emphasis is placed on team wellbeing and participation. At the beginning and end of each meeting, every team member is invited to *check-in* and *check-out* respectively, in which they can share with the group their current state of mind, any concerns they may be carrying or small insight to what else is happening in their life away from work. To encourage participation and enable visible *temperature checks* of the room regarding decisions, all team members are encouraged to participate through consensus decision-making hand signals. This enables participants to participate even if they do not feel the need to voice their own view on a decision. The team-meetings and convivial atmosphere can bring an engaged energy to Coexist's approach. Nonetheless, after six months of my residency it became clear that there were tensions within the team.

Through my engagement I was able to identify a growing concern, and indeed frustration, amongst team members that a rise in responsibilities and diminishing capacity was restricting the team's ability to construct spaces of critical reflection within their decision-making and regulatory processes. The opportunity to interrogate decisions on pressing issues within weekly meetings was proving untenable given the number of other operational tasks and *firefighting* that must be addressed. Furthermore, with more team members present, and more voices and opinions to be heard, it can lead to one topic dominating the majority of the meeting. In the past, when certain pressing issues have required further reflection, Coexist have constructed additional ad-hoc meetings, whether extended weekly meetings, strategy days or annual 'vision days'. However, a rapid increase in team members and responsibilities has made it more difficult to construct additional spaces for critical reflection on a regular basis. It not only requires significant resources to gather a team of approximately twenty members for a session between 4-8 hours long, it can also add extra strain upon the part-time team members, many of whom are already working at full capacity.

This observation is central to the overarching concern of this thesis: namely, how can organisations sustain radical, innovative practice and egalitarian ideals while also functioning as an economically sustainable business? My contention is that it is these precise moments in an organisation's growth and development, when tensions are rising, that trigger the introduction of more traditional business models and

⁵ A 'vision day' is when the Coexist team spend one or two days away from the Hamilton House building – either in a remote part of the countryside or visiting another community centre. The structure of the time there will involve individual and group exercises, cooking, eating and sleeping. It is an aspect of Coexist's practice in which it is possible to consider Coexist as an entity removed from the physical restrictions and daily responsibilities attached to Hamilton House.

techniques: Frustration and anxiety arising from financial pressures can cause some team members to question the *value* or *use* of more experimental spaces and egalitarian modes of practice. This can then manifest in a situation in which some team members feel they must choose between either a conventional hierarchical business model or succumb to the so-called 'tyranny of structurelessness' (Freeman, 1970). The impetus to discover new forms of practice is vital to disrupting this assumed dichotomy. The purpose of utilising filmic space as a space for critical engagement is therefore not only to multiply the amount of spaces but also diversify the kind of spaces in which team members - and potentially other building-users - can engage with one another; to construct more distinct and structured spaces with specified intentions; thereby reaffirming the stance that an organisation need not be viewed as a *place* where people are organised but instead as a 'set of fluid processes whereby needs and desires are cooperatively formulated and met... through a rich multiplicity of means (Reedy, 2014: 641).

If the intention for creating new spaces using film is not simply to multiply but diversify the kind of spaces of engagement, it is important to identify what aspects of current regulatory practice are causing tensions and create new alternate forms of engagement accordingly. A salient aspect of weekly meetings that generates tension is the dominance of particular discourses. More specifically, it is the way in which discourse can be used to curtail the input of other team members. Prominent moments I have noted involve using financial discourse and marketing discourse as a means to qualify one team member's perspective above others. There is a tendency to prioritise economic over more ethically grounded perspectives on proposed actions. This prioritisation of business goals is a common symptom of processes of institutionalisation. Nonetheless, what I identified as engendering the most limitations in weekly team meetings is a *solution-focused* approach to engagement. The solution-focused approach is indicative of a mindfulness discourse that permeates much of Coexist's internal discussions, whether encouraging team members to use the phrase 'and yes' when responding to someone else's suggestion or the line in their approach document that encourage team members to implement *openheartedness* within their practice (See Appendix I). A solution-focused approach is not problematic per se, but when it is combined with a lack of capacity for adequate critical engagement, it can create a situation in which disagreement or dissent is positioned as being unnecessarily difficult or obstructive. If there is not adequate time for dissent to be voiced, acknowledged and accounted for, this can contribute to feelings of frustration and disempowerment expressed by team members. For instance, a situation often arises in which an issue is raised and discussed at operational meetings but no consensus is reached and, therefore, no clear decision is made. This can lead to the person who raised the agenda point experiencing a lack of autonomy, while others can feel frustrated at the lack of space afforded to an issue, unable to adequately interrogate an issue so that actual consensus can be reached. This has led to some team members commenting that they have experienced 'passive

aggression' in needing to agree with the wider team with a lack of means to register dissent (Field Notes: 13/05/2015); others have expressed that team members often feel a lack agency from their ideas being consistently 'hen-picked' by the wider team (Field Notes: 01/07/2017).

The impetus to create new spaces of engagement was then partly motivated by the need to enable *spaces of dissent* within a particular growing organisation. In doing so, the intention was not to criticise any one specific aspect of Coexist's approach but offer balance. The mindfulness discourse of Coexist is a defining feature of their practice and demonstrates their own innovative approach to prefigurative politics. Coexist are highly sensitive to the performativity of language. It is embodied in their decision to call themselves 'Coexist' and also in their first act, after acquiring Hamilton House in 2008, to hang a banner that simply read 'Everybody' on the front of the building. Each act denotes a performative use of language, making bold statements of intent in their efforts to achieve a potentially unachievable vision. What is problematic is when a clear disparity emerges between the egalitarian ambitions of the language Coexist implement with the actual systems of decision-making and regulation that they practise. Therefore, the impetus is not to negate Coexist's solution-focused approach but instead to elevate the importance of dissent and the inability for this to exist within Coexist's current weekly operational meeting. Dissent and critical engagement are an opportunity to converge, challenge and indeed transform the codes of behaviour currently practised. This is a vital process of any organisations or collective with ambitions to enable positive social change. Moreover, it is vital for any alternative organisation that does not want to replicate the qualities of larger-scale business practice that they are attempting to refute. Empirical case studies regularly highlight how grassroots organisations and alternative economic practice still contend with issues of gender inequality (Oberhauser, 2005; Gregson & Rose, 2000), labour exploitation (Samers, 2005; Smith & Stenning, 2006) and racial-class privilege (Hodkinson & Chatterton, 2007; Hanson & Blake, 2009). Therefore, the opportunity that film practice presents is the ability to use the unique capacities of film to reveal the less tangible aspects of everyday practice and social tensions. Film will not be used to extend disembodied modes of thinking within Coexist's practice. Instead film will be implemented to present an embodied perspective of the organisation, that considers the affective and the emergent.

1.2 Disrupting the Mind/Body Hierarchy

Embodied facilitation exercises are typically implemented at the beginning of extended meetings, strategy days, vision days and other ad-hoc team interactions. The Coexist team implement embodied facilitation for various purposes: to reassess their open platform policy that defines who they allow to rent space in the

building; to interrogate local community issues the organisation might be embroiled in; to construct spaces where emotions surrounding staff disharmony can be unburdened; to brainstorm a new direction or programme for the organisation to adopt; to re-define job roles and departments; or to reinvigorate Coexist's core purpose and approach documents. Ultimately these sessions are utilised as opportunities to critically reflect upon the organisation's practice and consider new possible trajectories. What is important to emphasise is less what particular topic is being deliberated and more how team members not only engage with these topics but also how they come together in space and engage with themselves and one another. In the previous chapter I elucidated on the ethical approach that this thesis follows; that when asking what other worlds are possible, we must first alter our current perspective of the world. This ethical approach is echoed in Coexist's own approach and expressions of prefigurative politics, reaffirmed at one vision day when a former director stated, 'the task is to visualise what alternate futures we want, and then start making them... *today*' (Vision Day at Earth Heart Centre, Field Notes: 14/10/2016). It has been stated that to consider what else is possible, it is beneficial to escape the restriction of existing knowledges and discourses, otherwise it will 'condemn us to have only inadequate ideas' (Deleuze, 1988:18). It is for this reason Coexist facilitate embodied encounters: firstly to disrupt dominant discourse and systems of knowledge, and secondly, to enable new ways for participants to relate to one another, liberated from everyday roles, power relations and informal hierarchies. It is in this sense that it is possible to theoretically situate embodied facilitation as a form of micro-political activism in everyday practice.

Embodied facilitation is a gradual process that encourages participants to first consider their own body and material surroundings, before then considering the other bodies in the space. Guided by the facilitator's instructions, participants experience almost a slowing down, stripping back, and rebuilding process. This starts with the facilitator inviting participants to consider their own individual body: perhaps she might ask them to consider how they are standing; how their weight is spread; what their posture is like. Then the facilitator will ask for more focused bodily actions: perhaps to rotate one's right ankle, then knee, then leg; or instead focus on one's breathing, taking deep breaths in and then slowly releasing these breaths. Once participants are engaged with their own body through various exercises, the facilitator may invite participants to stand in a large circle and take turns to express their current mindset or emotional state either using their body or voice but, significantly, avoiding any actual words or signifying gestures. This exercise is important in two regards; firstly it reiteratively disrupts a mind over body hierarchy (Ogo & Dejerik, 2008; Goia, 2008; Firth, 2016); meaning communication and expression are no longer the exclusive realm of disembodied 'discourse' or 'representation' but can instead start in the flesh (Shaviri, 1993). Secondly, the humorous sounds and physical movements enacted by participants, will often cause laughter in the group; this is important because it demonstrates that the participants are taking risks (Goia, 2008), they are

'lowering their guard' so to speak. Specifically, they are allowing themselves to be *vulnerable* around others. It is this affective relation of vulnerability that enables a non-hierarchical group dynamic to be formed; and once it has been gently introduced through one exercise, it will be gradually intensified through the remaining exercises.

The next stage of facilitation will involve harnessing this affective relation of vulnerability and enhancing it, to make participants aware of how we interact with one another. This might begin with a small action, with the facilitator instructing participants to move around the room, to consider their own bodies moving in space. The participants will then be asked to acknowledge the other bodies they pass in the space, either through eye contact or perhaps even with a smile. Once an awareness to the other bodies in the space has been established, this will usually progress to a series of paired exercises. The facilitator will ask participants to come to a standstill and find the person nearest to them, she might then suggest that 'if you know the other person well, you may wish to find a different partner you are less familiar with'. The subsequent activities will then develop how we engage with one another on a one-on-one basis, sustaining the affective relation of vulnerability that has been cultivated up until this point. This may start with a physical activity, such as the one highlighted at the beginning of this chapter. Soon the activities will progress to several short talking and listening exercises⁶, changing partners each time. These exercises involve designating a Partner A and a Partner B within each pair; Partner A will be asked to speak without interruption for two minutes whilst Partner B listens. The topic Partner A is asked to speak about will often have a personal gravitas: '*What is your life goal?*', '*What is something you do not often share with others in your working day?*' or '*Tell your partner about a significant turning point in your life?*'. This exercise will encourage Person A to speak openly within a relatively intimate one-to-one setting, without the ability to deflect responsibility by asking questions of their own or providing only short answers. Person B is given the task of listening and engaging with Person A while they speak (usually maintaining eye contact and offering reassuring nods-of-the-head or smiles). The affective relation of vulnerability is being extended to how we speak *and* listen to one another. Once each partner has had a turn in the speaking role, the exercise will usually end with participants returning to a large group circle and – if appropriate given what was shared – summarising what their partner has said. They are therefore now taking the role of speaking on behalf of another person, choosing to edit appropriately, effectively representing a vulnerable encounter to a wider group. Importantly the participants are not interpreting or judging what is shared by their partner,

⁶ These paired activities may often take a different form, such as constructing mental life maps (River of Life exercise) or lucid drawing. These are less commonly used within Coexist's own internal facilitation, given the objective is usually to progress toward speaking in either small groups or larger groups.

they are only listening and repeating. Participants are thus (re)learning how to *listen*, avoiding reducing another's thoughts through interpretation (Goia, 2011a). Once this non-hierarchical group dynamic is formed, and participants are conscious of how they actively speak and listen to one another, the session can then progress to more group discussions around specific issues relating to the organisation's operations.

There are, of course, many variations on how a workshop implementing embodied facilitation might unfold. Coexist will usually concentrate on developing engaged speaking and listening when deliberating a specific issue within their day-to-day practice. However, more expansive sessions might take a very different route, that avoids such language-based tasks⁷. While having been exposed to several disciplines of embodied facilitation, the approach that most aligns with my own understandings of what is happening in these spaces – specifically considered through an affective lens - is 'soma therapy', a form of anarchist experimentation. The purpose of soma therapy is to construct human relationships removed from authority and hierarchy. It was initially developed in Brazil by Roberto Freire⁸ as a means to combat the feelings of anxiety, paranoia, and fear created by the US-backed military regime that took power through the 1964 coup d'etat (Ogo & Dejerck, 2008). Constructing bodily awareness is of particular significance given many participants, including Freire himself, suffered physical torture at the hands of the military regime. The approach compliments the affective lens that I am adopting because it specifically targets not only the restrictions of representational modes of thought but also the way in which capitalist values manifest in our bodies at an affective register. Soma therapy resists state structures of affect by firstly exposing those structures of affect. It is only then resistance can happen through a 're-conceived understanding and the creation of new affects at an embodied level' (Firth, 2016: 124). Once participants have stripped back all the everyday felt experiences, codes of behaviour and systems of knowledge through a series of exercises, it is then possible to rebuild and form new relationships to the world and with each other.

1.3 Facilitating a Space of Risk

Through my role as an embedded researcher I have come to acknowledge that embodied facilitation generates affective relations of vulnerability. This is a term that I have not seen used by practitioners or

⁷ I participated in a workshop focused on reconnecting with our latent creativity, and this was far more focused on art creations. I also participated in a vision day in which we were asked to articulate our own individual core purpose. One of the tasks for this session was to 'go off into the woods alone' – very much connecting with Viktor Turner's ideas around liminal space and ritualistic acts.

⁸ No relation to Paulo Freire

theorists of facilitation, yet that I assert is more effective in elucidating what is happening in these spaces. An immediate benefit of implementing *vulnerability* as a practice-based concept is that I am instantly able to circumnavigate the various specific terminology used by different teachings of facilitation. There are approximately six facilitators within the Coexist team and even within this relatively small pool there is a diverse array of approaches implemented: educational; activist; drama therapist, each of which contain within them various different schools and teaching structures. This can prove problematic when evaluating the practice as although some of the methods are seemingly similar, the intentions can be significantly different. For instance, the term 'safe space' is commonly used by all approaches but it soon becomes apparent this term is utilised with differing connotations. During a Lifebeat⁹ creative practice training workshop that was co-facilitated by a Coexist team member, I witnessed one participant challenge the term 'safe space'. The participant forthrightly stated that due to their ongoing struggle with social anxiety that they could never feel safe in a group environment (Lifebeat training weekend, Field Notes: 23/02/16). The facilitator calmly responded that they would never claim to construct a safe space, this is merely their intention, furthermore, that a safe space cannot be provided by the facilitators but must be continually negotiated by everyone participating. Speaking with the facilitator afterwards, they elaborated about the lack of clarity around this term. They themselves come from an activist background, often dealing in tense situations, occasionally with participants who value aggressive or violent tactics. In these cases 'safe' will often simply mean non-violent. A similar yet again different take on this idea of safety is found within female-only or non-male-identifying spaces constructed within Hamilton House. These spaces are constructed to support those who have experienced physical abuse from a male person and/or for those who want to engage in a social activity without the potential of male micro-aggressions¹⁰. Elsewhere, 'safe space' is used to encourage participants to engage creatively in activities, in which theatre techniques and ideas of 'play' are foregrounded. While the applied methods often appear similar, different Coexist facilitators will cite significantly differing influences. Whereas one facilitator might follow the theoretical framework of Brazilian theatre practitioner Augusto Boal, and his use of theatre as a radical pedagogical tool¹¹, another Coexist facilitator will cite a drama therapist approach that incorporates the psychoanalytic thought of Donald Winnicott, who emphasizes notions of *love*, *trust* and *play* in his approach.

One soon realises that the idea of 'safe space' is in fact encouraging participants to take risks. This is evidenced in mindfulness approaches where the aim is to construct spaces where participants can access

⁹ Lifebeat are a registered charity that use embodied facilitation techniques to improve the wellbeing of young people. More information: <https://lifebeat.uk>

¹⁰ Imayla; Bristol Bike Project

¹¹ Augusto Boal, *Theatre of the Oppressed*, 1979

the “learning zone” that sits between safety and panic. Significantly, ideas around panic and trust seem more appropriate than safety. This is far more explicitly signposted by soma practitioners in their approach. Soma practitioners emphasise ideas around 'risk' and 'trust' because to go through this process requires participants to let go of the security of performing your everyday subjectivity and social roles. There is an emphasis that when we feel safe and there is no risk in our lives, then we will never experience emancipatory change.

To live is more than just to survive, because “love, not life, is the opposite of death!... Risk is synonymous with freedom. Power is established in the search for security. A person who likes risk and adventures has to accept insecurity, because she has her own utopia, she lives for satisfying, at any cost, her need for pleasure. The highest form of security is slavery. Being slaves, we are someone’s property, we do not run any risk so long as we obey the fundamental rules of slavery: to not be free, to not have a choice.

(Roberto Freire cited in Goia, 2011b)

Vulnerability can therefore be considered a more appropriate term given it better encapsulates the transformative and emancipatory potential embedded in ideas of risk and trust. It acknowledges the risk of participants who have suffered physical violence, encouraging them to embrace their vulnerability to potential harm. Furthermore, emphasising affective relations of vulnerability between participants places this embodied encounters in stark contrast to the affective relations of competition, exploitation and greed that capitalist values engender.

1.3.1 Reconceptualising Vulnerability as an Affirmative State

Addressing what I have determined to be affective relations of vulnerability means that this project is directly contributing to the growing status of vulnerability within academic literature. “Vulnerability” is being utilised in various ways that diverge from a widely accepted understanding that implies weakness or failing. Instead, a state of vulnerability is being positioned as incipient to transformative moments and non-hierarchical relations. In geography, Paul Harrison has advocated for the elevation of vulnerability within non-representational approaches that emphasise embodiment (2008). Non-representational approaches have seen attention given to embodiment – specifically how time and space emerge through embodied practices (Harrison 2000; Wylie, 2002; Lorimer, 2005; Thrift, 2008). The *liveness* of embodied practice is often creatively evoked within non-representational literature (McCormack 2002; 2008; Dewsbury, 2014); which has influenced my own writing style in documenting embodied practice. Harrison's discussion of

vulnerability comes in part as a response to concern that an (over)emphasis on embodiment is perhaps lacking in terms of political strategy and application within a social context.¹² In response, Harrison does not so much agree or disagree but instead attends to what vulnerability might offer in terms of thinking about embodiment. Harrison asserts that vulnerability is integral to sustaining our relation to alterity, that it is a state antecedent to identity and recognition. In this sense, vulnerability cannot be construed as derivative of action, such as ideas of weakness or failing imply. Therefore, vulnerability is not considered to be the antithesis of strength or resistance, instead vulnerability suggests a state of receptivity and susceptibility to the unchosen and the unforeseen. The way in which Harrison advocates for the elevation of vulnerability certainly accords with my own consideration of vulnerability. Where there is a distinct disjunction is Harrison's adamant assertion that 'vulnerability cannot be willed, chosen, cultivated, or honed' (ibid: 427) or indeed 'flexed' (ibid: 440). In my reading, Harrison is making this statement because any notion that vulnerability can be manipulated by 'the subject' would negate his assertion of vulnerability being inherently nascent. Obviously my own accounts of embodied facilitation are very much concerned with how we can will, cultivate and harness the transformative potential of vulnerability. Yet, I am specifically discussing *affective relations of vulnerability*: this is not something nascent but something that emerges *between plural bodies in space*.

The notion of vulnerability emerging between bodies that I am foregrounding has been in part guided by Judith Butler's writings on embodied alliances that emerge during public assemblies (2015). Within this account vulnerability is also positioned as a receptive, susceptible and, therefore, transformative state. Butler has described dismantling an assumed binary between vulnerability and resistance as a feminist task, rejecting the notion that vulnerability and resistance are necessarily opposed and instead explicating how they coalesce by interrogating recent examples of public assembly, such as the Occupy and Black Lives Matter movements (2015). Butler has previously affirmed how vulnerability and resistance can emerge from a situation of precariousness, specifically with regards the precarious life of the Other. In Butler's collection of essays *Precarious Life* (2006) she comments that the US missed an opportunity in how they approached their foreign policy in response to the 2001 September 11 attacks. Butler argues that if we understand that all human life is vulnerable, at risk to injury and violent acts and, therefore, dependent on anonymous others, then this understanding of our shared corporeal vulnerability could form the basis of a new kind of non-violent ethics that enable non-military political solutions:

We cannot... will away this vulnerability. We must attend to it, even abide by it,

¹² Catherine Nash, 2000 – The criticism made by Nash is almost microcosmic of the criticism by Peter Hallward of Deleuzian ethics being too flighty and lacking political gravitas, which I addressed in the introductory chapter.

as we begin to think about what politics might be implied by staying with the thought of corporeal vulnerability itself. (2006: 29)

Yet the US foreign policy instead led with a campaign that aimed to protect its own vulnerability at the sake of others by increasing nationalist discourse, extending surveillance mechanics, suspending constitutional rights and developing implicit and explicit forms of censorship (ibid). A situation emerged in which any dissent against the US military action was deemed unacceptable in the public sphere of politics – evoked by President Bush’s statement that *you’re either with us or with the terrorists* (ibid). Butler states that this situation meant that rather than acknowledging a shared corporeal vulnerability between all humans, some humans were considered more vulnerable than others. Even more, that the ‘us and them’ binary engendered a situation in which some humans are disregarded as being human at all. By rejecting a shared vulnerability, the possibility of non-hierarchical social relations and new ways of existing is lost.

So what would a non-violent ethics of vulnerability look like? How can we elevate this shared corporeal vulnerability to radically alter how we approach cooperation? In *Notes Towards a Performative Theory of Assembly* (2015) Butler foregrounds how public acts of alliance can be understood as emerging from a shared acknowledgement of our vulnerability and our interdependence – our reliance on relations and networks of support. In her engagement with protest and occupation movements, Butler describes the precarity of people who are dependent on an unreliable, disappearing or decimated infra-structure and economic support - a paradoxical situation in which those left without the capacity to act must take action. During these public interventions bodies come together in space and recognise one another’s vulnerability, both in terms of their economic precarity and also the vulnerability of appearing in public space committing acts of dissent. In doing so, Butler is demonstrating how we can think vulnerability and agency together. This kind of coming together of bodies in space is what Butler labels ‘public performativity’, in which people are less defined by their identity than the relations formed between bodies. The embodied and relational aspect of these encounters is evoked by Butler’s overtly personal and sensual language she implements while describing the embodied encounters that emerge during public assemblies:

This movement or stillness, this parking of my body in the middle of another’s action, is neither my act nor yours, but something that happens by virtue of the relation between us. (ibid: 9)

It is the emphasis on the ‘relation between us’ that gives Butler’s theory of public performativity a distinctly transformative capacity - a transformative capacity that Butler’s previous concept of ‘performativity’ has

been criticised for lacking¹³. This is in part due to the shift of emphasis from speech acts to the lived body¹⁴. By attuning to the unfolding materialist experiences of bodies-in-space Butler is accentuating moments of 'being affected... where something queer can happen, where the norm is refused or revised, or where new formulations... begin' (2015: 64). This emerges from individuals encountering one another in a new way, defined less by their specific identities than the relations between them. It is the reconfiguring of how we relate to one another, how we encounter one another, that gives public performativity a transformative capacity.

The central point for my project is that, by describing the relations between bodies as a kind of resistance borne from the mobilization of vulnerability, Butler offers an account of resistance and transformation that is not inherently or militantly oppositional in a conventional sense. The resistance does not necessarily take the form of direct opposition but instead the acceptance of interdependence and shared vulnerability. Furthermore, the way in which Butler foregrounds what emerges between bodies first and foremost, beyond rigid identities and representational modes of thinking, accords with what I have observed within embodied facilitation. There is an understanding of our shared vulnerability generated through embodied actions. This is in itself the main purpose of such action. However, in doing so, there is also a more susceptible state enabled in which bodies are more susceptible to other ideas and formulations. A key aspect of this idea I take up is that these non-hierarchical social relations, generated through affective relations of vulnerability, are prioritized over the guarantee of tangible outputs being produced. It is this emphasis that I develop with my own approach to how affective relations of vulnerability can be generated through embodied film practice.

1.4 Conclusion

In this chapter I contend that embodied facilitation is indicative of the complex forms of resistance and transformation that can be identified in alternative and non-capitalist practices; that embodied practice

¹³ Butler established an understanding of 'performativity' within feminist theory that explains the cultural construction of identity. Following Simone de Beauvoir's statement that 'one is not born a woman, one becomes a woman,' Butler states that to 'become a woman' is to 'to materialise oneself in obedience to a historically delimited possibility' (Butler, 1988: 519). The word 'become' signifies that there is neither a pre-existing gender identity, nor that these identities are simply thrust upon us as passive recipients. It instead signifies that we are active agents within a repetitive act of subjectivation – it is in this sense that gender is performative. Yet despite this acknowledgement that we are active agents, it can be argued that repetition can only reproduce meaning, it cannot produce new meaning (Stoller, 2009). Consequently, this account of performativity by Butler has received criticism for 'failing to supplement the proverbial passivity imputed to the female body with a transformative capacity for action' (Del Rio, 2012: 32)

¹⁴ This has been described as a 'return to' or re-engagement with phenomenology, a canon of thought which Butler has previously distanced herself from in-line with other post-structuralists thinkers who were concerned with the essentialist implications of phenomenology (Coole, 2008)

demonstrates the way in which organisations that are not inherently oppositional or non-hierarchical interweave 'anti-', 'post-' and 'despite-' capitalisms. In choosing to make connections between embodied practice and how vulnerability has been discussed in academic literature in relation to radical insurrections, the ambition has been to elucidate how organisations can generate non-hierarchical spaces while also operating with more distinct job roles and responsibilities elsewhere in their practice. The argument is that more emphasis should be given to such affective moments rather than only analysing governance structure and specific methods of decision-making. More precisely, the theoretical framework emphasises how it is the affective relations of vulnerability generated by embodied practice that enables non-hierarchical social relations and does so in a manner that still enables participants to acknowledge and sustain their own differences. Therefore, it is possible to affirm that, while the language and theoretical canons may differ, this signifies an important convergence between academia and activists on the ground. By analysing how these spaces are constructed it is then possible to start considering how this can be extrapolated elsewhere in other realms of practice, specifically *how can we utilise affective relations of vulnerability in film? How will this enable new possibilities in terms of capacity? How can more people engage with this practice?*

CHAPTER TWO

REGULATING EMBODIED DISSENT THROUGH FILM

Introduction

Articulating acts of dissent as a series of embodied encounters shifts how we consider the very function and role of arts-based practice and film. Generating dissent through film need not only be seen as a demand or obstruction but instead an opportunity to reevaluate how bodies relate to one another and their material environment. As surveyed in the previous chapter, dissent does not only take the form of direct opposition but also encourages the acceptance of interdependence and shared vulnerability. It is through foregrounding affective relations of vulnerability that I have made connections between public acts of dissent and embodied facilitation practice. Embodied facilitation is implemented within Coexist's regulatory processes with the same function that spaces of dissent emerge elsewhere in the world: as a rupture from habitual ways of thinking and being, where new ideas and new relations can emerge. Through my vantage as an embedded researcher I have identified a need to extend these spaces beyond the core Coexist team. The reach and impact of Coexist has rapidly grown since its inception, which is discernible in the establishment of Hamilton House as a central hub for artists and social enterprises in Bristol. There is a need for new systems of engagement to further diversify the cross pollination of ideas within Coexist's regulatory processes. Increasing the current systems of engagement to include more participants is not viable due to

the capacity issues and strain the team are experiencing. It is therefore important not only to multiply but diversify spaces of engagement, to think how different kinds of spaces can be created that align with current capacity issues and present an opportunity for something new. It is at this point that the value of emphasising affective relations of vulnerability manifests. By identifying the relations that emerge between bodies, it becomes possible to start considering in what other ways and in what other kind of spaces can embodied encounters and affective relations of vulnerability be produced. The challenge I have identified is to think beyond the current embodied facilitation format and experiment with how film might act as a space of dissent where such relations can emerge.

This chapter surveys the coproduction of the film *Keyhole Whispers* (2015) - my initial attempts to implement filmic space as a space of dissent within Coexist's regulatory processes. The film interrogates a specific tension within Coexist's everyday practice, namely how does Coexist regulate security in Hamilton House space while combating issues of exclusion. The film deliberately foregrounds the material aspects of this tension to enable embodied encounters. An emphasis on materiality and embodiment has been present in film practice from its beginning. It is only relatively more recently that the role of vulnerability and embodiment has gradually risen in film theory - emerging as a rejection of visual representation as the dominating theoretical approach. A prominent example, which I will survey in Section 2.1 of this chapter is *haptic visuality*. This term denotes a kind of film viewing experience that foregrounds the tactile, thus provoking embodied sensations in the viewer. It emerges when viewers are presented with *haptic images* on the screen - images that are blurry, grainy, or indistinct. The distorted images obscures the viewer's ability to interpret meaning through conventional film language. Knowledge is not attained by what is represented on the screen, instead the viewer must call upon her own memories, ideas and thoughts, contributing her own meaning to the film. Haptic visuality therefore reconfigures how one can understand the epistemology and ontology of the film viewing experience. The viewing experience foregrounds how humans relate and interact with material entities and how knowledge and sensation emerges through embodied encounters. It is this reconfiguration that makes it possible to identify haptic visuality as enabling spaces of dissent. It is a theoretical lens that emphasises a notion of vulnerability between the film and the viewer. How this can be constructed through film practice is the focus of Section 2.2 of this chapter, in which I elucidate on the process of coproducing the film *Keyhole Whispers* (2015).

Finally, in section 2.3 of this chapter, I interrogate what happens when a more experimental approach to film is utilised amongst Coexist's regulatory processes. The filmmaking process interrogated to what extent a heightened sense of materiality can relate to ideas of regulation. Facilitating how, when and to whom the film *Keyhole Whispers* (2015) would be made accessible was an opportunity to scrutinise

the approach and theoretical framework of this doctoral project. It was during this stage of the coproduction process that practical issues manifested that challenged to what extent a practice-as-research approach is compatible within coproduced research. A distinct aspect of coproduction is how engagement happens at each stage of a research process, meaning new ideas and insight can emerge at any point. It is therefore the responsibility of the academic researcher to be continuously reactive and adaptive to new trajectories, while still sustaining the theoretical thread at the core of one's research. As this chapter will attest, a community group will often work in a more dynamic, reactive manner than is not always congruent with a research project. This realisation influenced the remainder of the doctoral research project, in which I learned to become more adaptive in my own approach.

2.1 Embodied Encounters through Film

To what extent we can recognise and understand affective relations of vulnerability in film is qualified by the growing critical interest in embodiment, affect and hapticity in film theory. In the same manner to how embodied facilitation encourages one to (re)engage with one's corporeal and material existence, recent decades have seen a shift in film theory that emphasises the felt sensations of the film-viewing experience. This is a considerable divergence from the previous critical paradigm in which visual representation dominated critical thought between the 1970s and 1990s, with film theorists applying psychoanalytic and semiotic structures to extract meaning and understanding from films¹⁵. While this previous paradigm enabled fruitful analysis of race, gender and other power relations, it nonetheless came to be considered inefficient in understanding the moving image beyond binary determinations and established signifying codes (Del Rio, 2008). Indeed, it is this persistence of maintaining visual representational critique that has led to psychoanalytic and semiotic film analysis being described as a *phobic construct* (Shaviro, 1993). This term refers to how the emphasis on visual representation establishes a critical distance between the moving image and spectator, a distance that deliberately excludes all other felt sensations stimulated by the film-viewing experience. The consequence is that by prioritising representational modes of thought, and reducing the scope of thought to within particular signification codes and systems of knowledge, this limits our ability to think differently. It is the desire to surpass this limitation that provided film theorists with the impetus to form new ways to consider how we experience film; ways that bring to the foreground our visceral and affective responses to film. In doing so, elevating the role of vulnerability in the viewing experience.

¹⁵ Christian Metz and Laura Mulvey

The question of how we might consider our corporeal and embodied responses to film has taken different trajectories within film theory. One approach, pioneered by film theorist Vivian Sobchack, draws upon feminist thought and existential phenomenology¹⁶ to offer an account of the film-viewing experience that is carnal or 'in-the-flesh' (2004). In *The Address of the Eye: A Phenomenology of Film Experience* (1992), Sobchack considers both the film and the viewer as entering into a mutually constitutive relation; one in which two bodies (both the human body and the film body) encounter one another and act upon one another through modes of embodied experience: visual, aural and kinetic. In disrupting any presupposition that film is a viewed object or *thing*, and instead considering film-viewing as an inter-relational experience, Sobchack's account eradicates the *scientific* distance maintained by representational modes of critique (ibid). In emphasising the inter-relationality, the phenomenal film experience takes on an 'autonomy that does not solely reside in the individual spectator' (Chamarette, 2012: 30). This effectively shifts the emphasis from the viewer as subject and film as object to instead the *inbetweenness* that occurs between the viewer and film. In conjunction with this new theoretical perspective of the film-viewing experience, Sobchack adopts a writing style that is distinctly sensual, to further evoke the bodily sensations of the individual (Sobchack 2004).

Emerging alongside Sobchack's existential phenomenology is a proliferation of texts on cinema inspired by Deleuze and theories of affect (Shaviro, 1993; Skoller, 2005; Del Rio, 2008; Buchanan, 2008). While these texts also aim to supplant visual representation with more visceral responses at an affective register, they will often exclude the personal individual foregrounded in existential phenomenology. The emphasis is instead placed upon assemblages: the body is less defined by its own specific differences - race, gender and class - and instead by its relations. The impetus for this approach is that it is 'precisely through relation/relationality that bodies become excessive with regard to binary codifications and their mimetic repetition' (Del Rio, 2008: 116). It is therefore possible to argue that, by circumnavigating the individual subject, a film-viewing experience understood through affect offers more transformative potential. It is for this reason that Deleuzian theory is described as 'impersonal' in relation to existential phenomenological accounts of the film-viewing experience, given its move away from subjectivity (Chamarette, 2012). Indeed, Sobchack's texts criticise literature that elevates the body yet does so in a way that treats the body as an object among other objects – or even as a machine – in which specific sexual, racial, class difference is disregarded (1992; 2004). Sobchack's own concerns are not without reason. The potential risks of disregarding such difference, is to firstly ignore the value sexual specificity has been ascribed by much

¹⁶ Maurice Merleau-Ponty – Sobchack draws from Merleau-Ponty's embodied accounts on experience while distances her work from the transcendental and religious aspects of other phenomenology, such as Edmund Husserl

feminist thought; and secondly, that the impersonal and 'neutral' body may simply resort back to the male white body (Grosz, 1994). Yet a prominent argument is that film can engage with both the personal and impersonal; film can function at the molecular affecting level and also at the wider molar level of race, class and gender when appropriate (Del Rio, 2008; Rizzo, 2012).

In considering how to negotiate these different approaches to embodied film viewing while also interrogating how affective relations of vulnerability emerge through film viewing, the work of film and queer theorist Laura U. Marks presents itself. Within her texts, Marks draws upon both existential phenomenology and Deleuzian theory within her concept of *haptic visuality*. The purpose of using the term haptic visuality is to reconfigure how we consider the viewing experience, placing emphasis on the felt and tactile sensations that film can produce. Haptic visuality invites the viewer 'to respond to the image in an intimate, embodied way' by engaging with bodily senses, such as touch, taste, and smell. (Marks, 2000: 2). Haptic visuality occurs when viewers encounter a haptic image, which refers to any image that cannot be easily consumed: an image that is grainy, overexposed, out of focus, damaged, decayed, distorted, pixelated (Grant, 2011). Haptic visuality is positioned by Marks as almost an antidote to what she labels *ocularcentrism*, which acknowledges how visual representation in film theory and practice has served as the 'hegemonic form of perception.' (2000: 43) Therefore the viewer is no longer in a position of mastery over the image, in which they adopt a third person critical distance - the viewer is not reading the film text, considering the intentions of the filmmaker (Ingram, 2014). The image is no longer reduced to making a specific social commentary or simply serving a wider narrative arc but must instead be contemplated in itself, as a material presence, through a first-person encounter.

Marks' haptic visuality applies Sobchack's existential phenomenological account of the film viewing experience by placing an emphasis on what emerges between the viewer and film. The way in which the haptic images forces the viewer to give up visual control and pulls the viewer's body in close is described by Marks as being an erotic encounter. The consideration of the viewing experience as erotic is explicitly foregrounds the *vulnerable* aspect of a viewing experience:

The viewer is called upon to fill in the gaps in the image, to engage with the traces the image leaves... the viewer relinquishes her own sense of separatedness from the image – not to know it, but to give herself up to her desire for it.

Marks, 2002:183

What emerges in these vulnerable and erotic encounters – the affective sensations, memories - is described by Marks as being in excess to what is present in the film itself. How we might process this experience is read by Marks through Deleuzian and Guattarian terminology. Marks describes the relation between the haptic and the optic in direct comparison to ideas of *smooth* and *striated space*:

The haptic critic, rather than place herself within the “striated space” of predetermined critical frameworks, navigates a smooth space by engaging immediately with objects and ideas and teasing out the connections immanent to them.

Marks, 2002: xiii

Marks is asserting that haptic navigates smooth space, meaning it operates at the affecting level, whereas optic visual representation is concerned with striated space, which refers to how the world is perceived through categorisations and systems of knowledge. In this sense one should not prioritise the haptic over the optic, which would construct a dichotomy between the two, rather there must be a lively flow and interchange between the two. Marks explains that she emphasises the haptic over the optical because it has been received a lack of attention, similarly to how Deleuze and Guattari spend more time interrogating smooth space because the hierarchical structure of striated space has received plenty of attention within post-industrial capitalism (ibid).

Marks’ haptic criticism performs in a manner that is comparable to embodied facilitation that I discussed in Chapter One. There is a shared impetus to reconfigure the body from the periphery so that it is at the centre of analysis and practice. There is an assertion that the body contributes to knowledge production and that we need to find new ways to think about and act with the body. Furthermore, there is a common desire to reconsider how we engage through our bodies with other entities, whether a human body or film body. To do this requires overcoming a Cartesian mind over nature hierarchy, and the first hierarchy that must be overcome begins with our own bodies. Importantly, the ambition is not to eliminate representational modes of thought or dissolve all oppositional binary categories. These categories and representational modes of thought must be engaged with if they are to be superseded (Grosz, 1994; Del Rio, 2008). Rather, through embodied encounters, we experience that which exceeds these modes of thought and knowledge systems. This has far reaching significance both in how we engage directly with one another and also with much wider topics, surrounding race, gender, hierarchy.

2.2 Vulnerability as Dissent

Haptic visuality can enable affective relations of vulnerability in film. Similarly to how this has been acknowledged in embodied facilitation (Goia, 2008) and also radical protests (Butler, 2015), these affective relations of vulnerability can enable an alternate way to encounter wide reaching political and social issues. It is by enabling new perspectives and disrupting dominant narratives that vulnerability can be construed as dissent. To further explicate my argument, I will briefly consider the way in which haptic visuality is implemented within the film *Hiroshima Mon Amour* (1959) by Alain Resnais. The film considers the nuclear attack on Hiroshima, Japan by the USA through the disintegrating relationship of a couple. Representational modes of thought have been regularly deemed inadequate to encapsulate the horrors of war. A prominent criticism is how conventional Hollywood cinema will often construct a dominant linear representation of World War 2 (Skoller, 2005). The potential risk associated with linear representations of war has been thoroughly scrutinised in film theory, particularly with regards the Holocaust, such as with Steven Spielberg's reductive portrayal of this catastrophic event (ibid). In this respect, Alain Resnais' *Hiroshima Mon Amour* (1959) is a space of dissent for the way in which it implements haptic visuality as a means of disrupting fixed representation of the nuclear attack. Resnais instead encourages multiple meanings by provoking the viewer to draw upon their own thoughts and memories. In the below segment I offer a creative response to express my own interaction with how haptic visuality plays out while watching the opening scene to Alain Resnais' *Hiroshima Mon Amour* (1959):



Figure 2.1: Screenshot from *Hiroshima Mon Amour* (1959) by Alain Resnais

The image on the screen fades in to reveal obscured bodies entangled, slowly writhing between one another. My memories are searched as I consider this embrace: *erotic... possibly parental... yet it is different*. What seems to be dust – maybe wood-dust – covers the bodies and continues to gently fall, covering the bodies more, distorting the skin. As the dust falls, a flourish of memories is released: *factory floors; woodwork classes; storage containers filled with forgotten objects*. The coming together of skin with dust transforms the bodies; an emerging fusion of organic materials; the human subjects become an object of encounter.

Another material begins to fall; glittering, non-organic, small shards of metal... or maybe glass... delicate yet with the potential to cut. It sticks close to the skin.



Figure 2.2 Screenshot from *Hiroshima Mon Amour* (1959) by Alain Resnais

The emerging object on the screen becomes something else again; no longer organic but a fusion of elements, a hybrid object. From the decimation something new emerges, a disconcerting yet graceful object; in this moment I experience both a sense of loss and also allure.



Figure 2.3: Screenshot from Hiroshima Mon Amour (1959) by Alain Resnais

A new image: a more familiar shot of two interlocking bodies; no longer entangled, they are recognisably horizontal; the skin no longer fused with other material but glistening from the sweat generated by an erotic embrace. Fingers push into skin... muscles contract and relax.

The moment-to-moment analysis of my responses during the film viewing experience elucidates how meaning is not always prescribed to the so-called *passive* viewer by the film. It is instead possible for meaning to be generated during the viewing experience, as the viewer encounters and interacts with the material presence of the film. The moment of dissent therefore goes beyond disrupting dominant narratives regarding the historical event in Hiroshima. Dissent emerges as an affective relation of vulnerability generated through the viewing experience; reconfiguring how we engage with other material entities in space. By reconfiguring our material relations, we enable new ways of being and thinking. Engaging with the haptic and attending to the affective register disrupts and refracts wider systems of knowledge and codes of behavior.

2.3 Tactile Disjunctures in Film: *Keyhole Whispers* (2015)

PLEASE WATCH *KEYWHOLE WHISPERS* (2015) FILM



Figure 2.4: Still taken from the film *Keyhole Whispers* (2015) showing the coded double doors at the front of Hamilton House and a user of the space on the outside

The film *Keyhole Whispers* (2015) produces haptic visuality to enable an embodied engagement with regulatory processes surrounding security and exclusion in the Hamilton House building. The film participates with an ongoing dilemma for Coexist of how an organisation, with a small core team, approaches making decisions that will impact a diverse range of stakeholders and an estimated 10,000 weekly building-users. The pressure to perform efficiently according to conventional business practice often causes conflict with some team member's ambition to address issues within Coexist's practice from an ethical perspective: Who should be involved in decisions regarding the Hamilton House building? Are Coexist attempting to *provide* a space *for* or *create* a space *with* users of the space? The film was an opportunity to experiment with how to diversify spaces of engagement. The film deliberately employs a haptic, embodied and sensory experience of moving in and through the Hamilton House building, in an attempt to disrupt representational modes of thought.

We coproduced the film in response to discussions surrounding security in the Hamilton House building. A theft had occurred in one of the studios after a person gained access beyond the secured doors at the front of the building. The main access to the different spaces and studios in the Hamilton House building is through two green doors, which are located next to the front desk. Regular users of the building who rent space are either given an access fob or security code to go through the coded double doors adjacent to the reception area. If a member of the public wants to attend a class, workshop or any other event, they can request permission at the front desk. A common way in which people gain access without permission is by tailgating other building users as they go through the coded doors. It is assumed this is what led to the theft in the building. The theft that occurred was relatively low impact, a bag and a phone had been stolen from one of the events spaces. It nonetheless required the Coexist team to raise the issue of security at the weekly operational meeting (Field notes, 10/02/15). A journey then began that would lead to this relatively routine aspect of Coexist's everyday practice forming the subject matter of the film *Keyhole Whispers*.

We chose this event as the subject of our coproduced film because at the crux of this seemingly mundane issue was an ethical dilemma regarding Coexist's role as regulators of space in the Hamilton House building. A visible discord between team members had arisen during consecutive weekly meetings regarding how the team approached regulating security in the building; how decisions were made; and who should be involved. One section of the Coexist team perceived the issue as a straightforward legal matter, for which Coexist are obliged to provide effective security measures to fulfil the requirements of their insurance policy. It was therefore proposed to increase security by introducing a CCTV camera above the coded doors as a deterrent against tailgaters. It was also suggested that all building users should be required to wear lanyards with photographic ID at all times. However, some members of the team remained unconvinced that increasing security was the rational response, moreover, there was concern that in introducing more explicit security measures, this could increase feelings of exclusion in the building. After being allocated time to discuss the issue at two consecutive weekly meetings, it became apparent the issue would not be easily resolved.

I noted a palpable sense of frustration amongst team members as they discussed the issue of security. It was clear some were keen to use this as an opportunity to interrogate the organisation's regulatory processes, with one director suggesting wider engagement with Hamilton House building users while emphatically questioning '*who* does this space belongs to?'. Other team members felt this was yet another example of over-analysing a relatively straightforward matter. This view was expressed by one team member who lamented the team's inability to implement 'normal' business practice, suggesting Hamilton House should emulate other coworking hubs, such as the Google campus in London. It was clear

that there were members of the team who were not comfortable with the idea of emulating a Google campus and consider Coexist a different kind of project. Ultimately, the inability for the agenda point to be resolved at two consecutive weekly meetings was symptomatic of the lack of appropriate spaces to critically engage with these tensions. While some of the team wanted to encourage dissent and critical interrogation, others were keen to swiftly react to the theft with an action. A working group was formed between myself and two directors to discuss how film could be utilised to engage with the issue of security and exclusion.

Scoping Study

Adopting a practice-as-research enables a different kind of interrogation of everyday tensions and regulatory process. It creates the opportunity explore academic theory through arts practice. Yet there is also space to implement more conventional social scientific research methods. Indeed, it is often the observations and data gathered through such social scientific research methods that will often inform later artistic decision-making. This is demonstrated by how I was able to observe the micro-power relations attached to dominant discourses, while participating in Coexist's weekly operational meetings. During weekly meetings financial and legal discourse tended to take precedent over more ethical or mindfulness discourses. This was evident in how certain initiatives and activities were reported back to the wider team and evaluated during meetings. While some team members would value the social impact of an activity, others might prioritise the financial gain. It is important to have this kind of balance within an organisation that is trying to affect positive social change while sustaining an economically viable business model. Yet it can create tension when decisions need to be made and there is no clear pathway to take, such as with the issue of security.

Having identified the incongruence of different discourses within team meetings, I was keen to conduct interviews with other buildings users, to diversify the different perspectives involved. It was through conducting these interviews that I was able to expose some of the assumptions surrounding the issue of security. Through the interviews it became apparent that the tension surrounding security was not the distinct dichotomy I had earlier observed. It had appeared that those team members who felt there was an ethical decision to consider regarding security in the building were also wanting to ensure licensees were consulted within the decision-making process. Yet this viewpoint did not match that of the licensees I spoke with. I spoke with one tenant, a puppeteer, who began renting studio space when Hamilton House first opened. The participant articulated how the dynamic between the Coexist team and the licensees - or *tenants* - had significantly shifted since Coexist's initial inception. It seems that a decision was made during the organisation's more formative years for there to be more defined roles between the Coexist team and

licensees; with the Coexist team taking direct responsibility for providing a safe and usable space. Until that stage it had been common practice that if maintenance or construction to working spaces was required, licensees would also undertake these tasks. The licensee expressed a sense of empowerment gained by being alleviated of the responsibility to maintain the spaces. They were more content with being able to register complaints or issues with the building at the front desk, with the hope of seeing these issues resolved.

The diverse range of perspectives regarding issues of security and exclusion were further revealed when I spoke with Coexist director Brendan Tate. During previous Coexist meetings, Brendan had supported further critical reflection regarding the coded doors and had even proposed removing them entirely. However, when I spoke with Brendan he also expressed his concern that the discussions surrounding security and exclusion could become to 'heady' or 'vague', with regards any ethical issues attached. He instead was more interested in how users of the building physically interact with the doors; he wanted to learn more about the nuisance of fumbling for keys or having the door shut on you. The perspectives of Brendan and the puppeteer were illuminating regarding process of regulation. They demonstrated how tensions can be inaccurately represented if people are not given enough time to express their ideas more thoroughly. It is possible that if the agenda point had been given more than the allotted 5-10 minutes at the operational meeting, the issue may still not have been 'resolved' per se, yet it could have avoided the palpable sense of frustration and tension that was caused by a lack of adequate time.

The interview with Brendan had also reaffirmed my intuition that film could help offer a different perspective of everyday tensions; a perspective less focused on discourse and more concerned with embodied experiences. As a first step, I conducted a participant observation of the coded double doors with my camera. I observed a series of low-key moments the Coexist director had predicted. There is almost an everyday farce that surrounds the coded doors: building-users chasing and lunging for closing doors, or individuals fumbling for keys with various bits of kit and materials precariously balanced in their arms. In conjunction with observing the doors as a physical obstruction, I also witnessed how the doors can engender feelings of exclusion. I watched as a young male adult almost tailgated some licensees to gain entrance to the building. He held the door for a moment and, rather than going through, instead closed the door and approached the reception desk. The person asked if he could tour the building and see some of the studios. The Coexist team members at the front desk informed the person that they were unable to view the building at that time without an appointment but they could attend one of the Hamilton House open days. Unfortunately, the next open day was not for another six months. The person was discernibly dejected by being denied access but he nonetheless thanked the person on front desk and left the building. The moment

exposed that regardless of the logic or reasoning attached to decision-making processes, if someone is not given any access to these discussions, there is more potential for feelings of exclusion. In this instance, all the person knows regarding the ongoing issues of security is that he entered the community building, attempted to look around, but was not allowed.

Film Practice

Conducting interviews and participant observation studies is a valuable entry point into an ongoing issues and everyday tensions. It is an opportunity to *map* different perspectives and ideas attached to a subject matter before creating an arts practice. One must, however, not misconstrue the function of the arts practice as merely communicating what qualitative data has been attained. The information should serve the art and not the other way round. Practice-as-research makes it possible to apply theoretical lenses through the specific capacities of the chosen arts practice. Through my research project, I am *thinking through film*. The observations and ideas pooled together during this research and development process informs my artistic decision-making. The film *Keyhole Whispers* (2015) was made to enable a space of dissent where the issue of security could be considered through a more embodied experience, by applying the notion of haptic visuality. I used this theoretical lens, to foreground how the disembodied discourses of the Coexist weekly meetings - at the top of the building - were both theoretically and physically distant from the embodied experiences of the coded doors at the bottom of the building.



Figure 2.5: Critical Mass by Hollis Frampton (1971). Image shows the single shot of a couple arguing.

Keyhole Whispers (2015) enables haptic visuality by attending to the tactile quality of sound. Haptic visuality is regularly spoken about in terms of visual images yet manipulation to the can be equally evocative. This is demonstrated in the film *Critical Mass* (1971) by Hollis Frampton. The film features two people acting out an argument. The sound and image is manipulated in post-production, with the speech cut into, repeated and layered. This creates disjuncture - it reduces words to a texture; an aural sensation - in doing so, it generates haptic visuality in the viewing experience. It does this by not representing a specific argument but by evoking the sensations attached to process of arguing: sharp intakes of breath; strained voices; abrupt shifts in volume. It is not only the audio track itself that is manipulated but there is also a disruption to how it syncs to the visual image. The film begins with a black screen while the audio starts to play. When the visual image does start to play, it is often out of sync with the soundtrack; thus creating further disjunctures. The disjunctures created evoke the sensation of remembering an argument one has had in the past. One will not recall the entire discussion in detail, instead one will remember isolated moments of image and sound; the embodied felt sensations.

The way I manipulated the soundtrack in the film *Keyhole Whispers* (2015) emulated the use of haptic sound ones finds in *Critical Mass* (1971). The film does not offer an accurate representation of the different perspectives and opinions held regarding issues of security and exclusion in the building. The impetus is not represent dissent but present dissent. The first way this is achieved is by elevating the materiality of the doors through the up-close loud sound of the door continually slamming shut. The slamming door cuts through the voices on the soundtrack; evoking the way in which decisions are made *behind closed doors* so to speak. The heightened sound of the door slamming elicits an embodied responses from the viewer. There is the potential for the viewer to contribute their own thoughts to what they experience; possibly awakening embodied memories of having a door shut or slammed - maybe the slamming of a door during one's childhood during a parental argument; or the feeling of a closed door after a long journey when one suddenly realises they have left their keys at another location. Conversely, while the film potential expands the experience beyond this specific set of coded doors, it simultaneously reduces the experience to a degree; almost emphasising that this is *just a door, like any other*; it opens and closes with little severity attached. Dissent is also presented in the film in how the slamming door obstructs the speakers' voices, not allowing for any form of resolution, instead creating space for disagreement to exist. The intention of this filmic space to act a space of dissent, enabling the dissonance of ideas and opinion. By recognising dissent in this way, the film asserts how it is inappropriate to judge Coexist as an organisation based on any specific decision they might make because there will always be a variety of conflicting views embedded within each decision.

2.4 Regulating Engagement

Keyhole Whispers (2015) was coproduced as a means to increase and diversify engagement within Coexist's regulatory processes. The film was created as a space of dissent in itself. Instead of representing different viewpoints or specific ideas, the film acts more as an *expressive artefact*, evoking the disagreements, the disputes and the power relations that permeate nearly all decisions made within any organisation. The ethical intention of the film was to enable a perspective and encounter with Coexist that is not always possible for those outside of the internal core team - to present vulnerable moments when members of the team are unsure, confused and undecided. The film reveals that the Coexist team - those *in charge* of such an established social hub - do not necessarily consider themselves *experts* in community management yet they nonetheless strive to lead, with the aim of generating spaces that can enable positive social impact.

I contend that the capacity of the film to act as an expressive artefact - presenting dissent - substantiates its value as a form of engagement. The film could be screened by the coded doors at the entrance of the building or made available on the Coexist website. It is perhaps an intrinsic quality of coproduction, and an inherent pragmatism possessed by some community workers, that some people in the Coexist team felt the film should act as a more pronounced tool of engagement. Where does the *impact* happen? Who does the film *reach*? To what extent participatory forms of art should be assessed in terms of substantiated social impact has been vehemently debated by art theorists and critics (Bishop, 2012; Bourriaud, 1998). Relational aesthetics is a term coined to refer to arts practice where human interactions and social context are elevated above more personal encounters between an individual and an artwork. A prominent criticism of relational aesthetics is that when arts practice is grounded and contingent upon its specific environment and audience, it restricts the ability for art to exist as an autonomous entity; an entity that transcends its context (Bishop, 2004). With respect to this coproduced research project, the film *Keyhole Whispers* (2015) emerged from a specific context, to diversify forms of engagement. Yet how far this engagement would extend was negotiated and developed with the community partner. Once the film was made there was a discernible shift in impetus; if *making* the film was a way of diversifying engagement, the question of how to *facilitate* the film was driven by the urge to regulate this engagement. The desire from some team members for more tangible outputs provoked a new kind of critical engagement that parallels feminist film theorist Jane Gaines questioning of whether documentary films have ever brought about change, 'What do we count as change? How do we know what effects the film has produced? How do we determine where consciousness leaves off and action begins?' (1999: 88).

The consideration of how to regulate engagement manifested when I first showed the film *Keyhole Whispers* (2015) during a weekly team meeting. I presented the film at the end of a short presentation, in

which I proposed making more films interrogating everyday social tensions within the organisation. The film provoked various reactions amongst the team, with some team members responding directly to the film and others more concerned with the film's purpose. The visceral response I hoped to elicit was substantiated by one director who simply exclaimed, 'Arghh that noise!' when the film finished playing. Another member of the Front of House team was quick to address how this related to their everyday practice; 'This, this is what I experience everyday'. A member of the space management team then exclaimed 'What are we going to do with those doors?!'. In my presentation I had affirmed that there is a value in creating a space that is not 'solution-focused' and instead embraced dissent. Nonetheless, a minority of the team felt that the film should be utilised to deliver an action. Others were more happy for the film to act as a space of dissent but suggested that more consideration be given to how and where the film is publicly screened.

When discussing how we could utilise the film as a more pronounced tool of public engagement, I initially suggested that we could convert the film into an online participatory film. My idea was that we could allow users of the building and members of the public to upload audio recordings of their own opinion of the coded doors in Hamilton House. These could then be synced with a live feed of the coded; the voices of the submitted recordings being interrupted every time the doors closed. The proposed film would align with literature that elevates ideas of agonism and dissent above consensus in their capacity to enable social cohesion between diverse stakeholders (Staeheli, 2010; Amin & Thrift, 2005; Barnes & Sheppard, 2009s). While the idea was warmly received, my suggestion raised an issue that I had not given enough consideration to within my project until this point. A director of the team, Daniel Balla, who is an experienced facilitator, was supportive of encouraging spaces of dissent but expressed concern at the idea these spaces would not be carefully facilitated. He suggested it would be inappropriate to create a space where there was no two-way engaged relation. This was an astute criticism that is reaffirmed by various case studies that posit how online spaces, rather than being the egalitarian spaces first conceptualised with the rise of the internet, are actually highly contentious spaces that can easily reaffirm social inequality and oppressive discourses (Carpentier, 2009; 2014; Ringrose, 2011). We would therefore need to find a more involved way of facilitating the public screening of the film.

Deciding how to proceed with the film *Keyhole Whispers* led to us coproducing a series of public-facing workshops under the title *Spaces of Dissent*. The project was devised with Coexist director Brendan Tate. We decided that we could use film as a means of critically engaging with everyday tensions that many grassroots organisations and startups encounter. We therefore invited participants from other charities and social enterprises to attend the workshops, in which expertise could be shared in spaces of mutual learning.

Each workshop was facilitated by different members of the Coexist team. It was an extensive project that yielded many interesting insights, the details of which I include in the appendix (See Appendix II). There are two important areas of learning to note. Firstly, there was distinct willingness and enthusiasm amongst Coexist team members to diversify the spaces of engagement within Coexist's regulatory processes; both in terms of allowing more time for critical reflection and also including more people from outside of the immediate Hamilton House community. The second aspect was we learned that integrating a film practice and with facilitation approaches was more problematic than we had initially considered. The more gradual research and development process I required while making films was incongruent with facilitators more dynamic and pragmatic approach to designing a workshop. During the coproduction of these workshops, there were times when the facilitators decided it was important to drastically change the focus of the workshops, to be more relevant and useful to participants - yet this change happened while I was halfway through constructing a film. For another workshop, it was suggested a day before that perhaps we lose the film section altogether. The experience revealed that while embodied facilitation and film practice might both be able to produce *affective relations of vulnerability*, that does not mean the approaches are necessarily compatible.

2.5 Conclusion

The process of making the film *Keyhole Whispers* was vital to the progression of the coproduced research project. The film allowed me to experiment with and discover an approach to filmmaking that would enable new approaches to regulatory processes that foreground vulnerability as a form of dissent. Making the film within as an intervention within the everyday practice of a grassroots organisation also grounded what was at stake when approaching coproduction. The mapping stage in which I had interviewed building users and team members and conducted a participant observation was an integral process of engagement within the coproduction of the film. Indeed, on reflection, I realised that it was at this stage in the coproduction of a film that I should be utilising the skills and expertise of the community partner. While the workshops illuminated some areas of incongruence in terms of approach, they had reaffirmed shared theoretical interests between myself and the Coexist team, while also establishing a more robust working relationship. Going forward, the Coexist facilitators became more involved in the design and construction of the coproduced films. This not only improved the quality and relevance of the films, it also enabled a healthier power relation. There had been some discontent toward my initial intervention when making the film, one director had voice concern at having someone 'outside' the core team instigating this process. Nonetheless, this dissipated when more control and influence was given to the Coexist team members. Finally, another reason in which it is more valuable having the community partners involvement in the development of the films is that this creates a longer lasting impact from the team. Workshops are often insightful and engaging

yet the impact is relatively fleeting. The advantage of doing the engagement before a film is made is that this is then forever embedded within the film, as an expressive artefact of an event.

CHAPTER THREE

ENGAGING THE VIRTUAL AND THE EMERGENT

Introduction

In the social sciences, expanding what constitutes the empirical - what we can observe and experience - enables us to consider the affective register or the excess of conscious perception (Adkins & Lurry, 2007; Gane, 2009; Clough, 2009). Affect refers to the moment to moment being of a world in constant change. Accordingly, empirical case studies are attending to the the less tangible, less easily perceived textures of everyday life. Theories of affect can help us understand aspects of phenomena that are not tangible yet that have tangible effects. In doing so, there is more to be accounted for when interrogating a social tension or political issue, we are not limited to only that which we can measure or quantify, there is also a recognition of *the virtual*. The virtual was conceptualised by author Marcel Proust as a way of signifying those aspects of life that are not actual - they do not have a material presence – yet are nonetheless real (Shields, 2003). The most prominent example is memory. Memory is by no means concrete – it is not a *thing* one can touch

or understand through quantitative measurements alone – yet its impact is very much real: memory affects bodies and generates actions. Furthermore, considering affect refers to the capacity to act and be acted upon; memories not affects but can in turn be affected; meaning memories can change. It is in this sense we can describe memory as being virtual: real but not actual. This notion is not limited to just memory but can also include other virtualities: hope; desire; nostalgia; anxiety; regret; guilt; and so on.

An expanded empiricism that acknowledges the virtual significantly alters how we position our existence and the spaces we move through. Space is not a fixed present but rather a continually unfolding *ecology* - where virtual and material relations combine (Papadopoulos, 2010; Park et al, 2011). This means that a social tension or cultural phenomena cannot be considered in isolation as it is not fixed, it is constantly adapting, being recreated, depending who or what comes into contact. An expanded empiricism therefore shifts the attention of research to address the 'movement, potentiality and virtuality immanent to matter' (Clough, 2009: 44). This theoretical shift invites a particular style of engagement with the world, more sensitive to discrete moments in which 'social life is reordered and other possibilities may be glimpsed' (Anderson, 2006: 15). The scope of study goes beyond humans and can include entities that are both present and absent, ranging from texts, images, words, objects, plants, pathways, sensations, thoughts, memories, ideas, and so on (Anderson & Harrison, 2010). Consequently human experience is not the central focus of study. Instead one is presented with a perspective of the world in which matter and meaning is continuously, iteratively reconfigured through *intra-actions* (Barad, 2007). The term intra-action is used to move beyond the idea that individual things pre-exist interactions with one another, instead insisting that all entities emerge through and as part of their intra-actions (ibid, 139). This theoretical lens can enable more nuanced understandings of social tensions and political issues by refuting normative ideas of causality and revealing the capacity for change that permeates discrete encounters.

In this chapter I survey how we coproduced the film *Conversations in Neon* (2016) as a means of engaging with the virtual and emergent aspects of gentrification in Stokes Croft. The film was made to reconfigure ideas of causality and to move beyond only thinking of Stokes Croft as an empty space filled with distinct individuals, groups and organisations, and instead consider it as an unfolding ecology. I argue that the value of this kind of engagement with the gentrification phenomenon is that it enables new ways of thinking and acting for Coexist within their regulatory processes. Team members have regularly expressed frustration regarding the rapid change that has been witnessed in Stokes Croft since Coexist's inception. There is a well-rehearsed narrative regarding the role of grassroots organisations within processes of gentrification that is often ascribed to Coexist. The narrative posits a situation in which grassroots and alternate economic organisations will inevitably attract the very same market-led development that they

first sought to resist; that by attempting to present an alternate approach to urban development they merely accelerate the displacement of lower income residents and vulnerable communities. Coexist have regularly been accused within the public domain of attracting big business and *causing* gentrification in the Stokes Croft area.

Embedded within the construction of the film *Conversations in Neon* (2016) was a need to disrupt the restrictive narrative regarding gentrification. It was also an opportunity to confront and engage with the often excluded virtualities attached to this phenomenon; the anxiety, nostalgia, desire and hope. The film presents a perspective of gentrification as a continuously unfolding phenomena, that emerges from a complex entanglement of virtual, human and material relations. As a process of coproduction, making the film *Conversations in Neon* (2016) required us to move beyond normative ideas of public engagement. Perceiving space as an unfolding ecology - emerging through intra-actions of virtual and material relations - reconfigured are role as actors. We embraced the notion that 'we are part of the nature that we seek to understand', meaning our roles as filmmaker and facilitators meant that we were not separate but emerge through and as part of the gentrification phenomenon (Barad, 2007: 26). Conscious of our own affecting role, we placed more energy into our initial engagement as an intervention. After developing the initial concept of the film, we utilised Coexist's facilitation expertise to hold a social sculpture as an intervention in a contested space in Bristol. This intervention then fed back into the construction of the film; allowing for a more fluid coming together of approaches. The purpose of engagement and the possibilities of Coexist's regulatory processes are thus reconfigured. We not only want to expand Coexist's reach with other community actors but also expand what we are able to perceive; what we are able to engage with; and what constitutes the empirical.

3.1 Expanding the Empirical

The emergence of an expanded empiricism is a shift in attention to the unfolding materiality of the world, the capacity to affect of human, non-human and other material entities. This emphasis on materiality is a prominent feature of non-representational approaches in geography. Non-representational theory develops the post-structuralist notion of performativity. The notion of performativity posits that we do not exist as fixed subjects but that we emerge with and through our actions as a process of subjectification. Judith Butler uses performativity to explicate that gender is constructed through a series of repetitive acts - gender does not pre-exist nor is it thrust upon us as passive beings, instead it is a *doing* that materialises through our gestures and speech acts (1990). It is in this sense that gender is performative. Yet despite its regular discussion of the body, post-structuralism has been criticised for failing to bring the discursive and the

material into closer proximity (Barad, 2007). Non-representational approaches however consider the performativity of everything, the way everything 'takes-part and in taking part, takes-place: everything happens, everything acts' (Anderson & Harrison, 2010: 14). Non-representational theory can therefore be described as an *especially materialist* form of post-structuralism (Anderson, 2006). What is at stake, according to critical theorist Brian Massumi, is that it is the very materiality of the body – its movement and sensation – that offers the capacity for change (2002). Therefore, if the dominance of discursive practices continues at the expense of the body, it limits our capacity to change.

The capacity to change - to think and act differently - is an important aspect of grassroots organisations and activists. Attending to discursive practices is still an important tactic for change, which can enable ontological reframings, as demonstrated by the diverse economies approach. The diverse economies approach - following literature on governmentality - affirms that an integral technology of government is 'creating a social reality that it says already exists' (Lemke, 2000: 13) and discourse is an important aspect of this process as language is 'not merely contemplative or justificatory, it is performative' (Rose & Miller, 1992: 177). The diverse economies approach therefore does not target neoliberal global capitalism but the 'capitalocentric' discourse that has 'colonised the entire economic landscape' with its universalising claims (Gibson-Graham, 2006: 55). To transfer this theoretical interrogation into practice, Gibson-Graham began working with alternate economic groups to develop a new counter-discourse, as a means to disrupt the *representation* of an omnipotent, all-consuming globalised capitalism (Gibson-Graham, 1996). In attending to discursive practices, Gibson-Graham helped establish a canon of empirical research adopting a relational view of the economy in which capitalism is just one element in an interwoven set of economic practices (Masterman-Smith, 2000; Smith & Stenning, 2006; McKinnon, 2010; Wright, 2010; Cornwell, 2012; Erdem, 2014). Nonetheless, a prominent criticism is that if theory remains in the relatively abstract or disembodied field of discourse, it is not able to adequately attend to the *messy actualities* of social relations in everyday practice (O'Malley et al, 1997). The diverse economies approach has been accused of myopia because it is unable to rigorously confront the fact that many grassroots organisations and alternate economic practices still contend with issues of gender inequality (Oberhauser, 2005; Gregson & Rose, 2000), labour exploitation (Samers, 2005; Smith & Stenning, 2006) and racial-class privilege (Hanson & Blake, 2009). It is telling that over a decade after its initial formation, Gibson-Graham began encouraging others to go beyond discourse and consider the ways in which human, non-human and material entities affect one another (Gibson-Graham & Roelvink, 2010). This theoretical expansion was made to enable more close analysis of grassroots actions - by engaging with new systems of knowledge, it might reveal new ways of acting and responding to the issues grassroots organisations' experience. While

this denotes an adjustment of the theoretical lens, the impetus remains the same: to create new ontological and epistemological perspectives to assist in creating new worlds.

Attending to the affective relations between human, non-human and material entities does not replace the scrutiny of discursive practice. It instead enables another lens for research to interrogate the messy actualities and everyday textures of the world. In doing so, this increases our understandings of the capacity for change. There are numerous action research studies attending to discrete moments of transition from one state to another. This is evidenced in empirical case studies examining the actions and practices of activist groups. Affect can be utilised to consider the dynamic relations that play out in political protests and how encounters between protesters and the police can either increase or decrease the collective body's capacity to act during political protest. One case study gives the example of a notable moment of change that occurs during the deployment of tear gas on protesters by police at a rally (Sharpe & Hyne, 2009). When the police release teargas, the chemical agent makes contact with the skin of the protesters, causing severe eye and respiratory pain. This chemical reaction provokes protesters to lock their arms together more tightly. In this moment, it is therefore possible to observe the transition from a state of being asphyxiated and blinded to an increased state of resilience and defiance. While this case study attends to a violent moment, studies regularly attend to less prominent and more easily missed moments of change.

If grassroots organisations are going to more thoroughly engage with issues of exclusion, privilege and exploitation in their everyday practice, then they need to attend to discrete moments and micro-power relations that permeate all collective activity. One study of the 'No Borders camp' at Calais set-up for refugees, examines how boundaries and power dynamics between activists and recipients of care are not fixed relations established by the activists (Millner, 2015). The study attends to a moment of shared laughter, in which recipients of care express their desire to watch a comedy at a film screening rather than a political documentary, which the activists had considered more directly relevant to their current situation. The study illuminates how boundaries between humans are in a constant flux, being disrupted and re-negotiated through a series of embodied encounters. It is vital that in their quest to think and act differently, grassroots organisations are aware and responsive to these kind of micro-power relations. It will assist groups as they confront issues of gender, labour exploitation and racial-class privilege. Furthermore, attending to such discrete moments of change can also substantiate what tools of engagement can reinforce positive encounters. The value of doing so is shown by a case study surveying the group activities conducted at a World Social Forum (Roelvink, 2010). The study utilises theories of affect to consider how when individuals participate in group activities - as a collective body - this can in turn increase an individual's capacity to be affected. The study specifically analyses the capacity to experience *hope* through individuals

sharing testimonies together at a group meeting. The study reaffirms that it is these less tangible virtualities that deserve more attention to increase our understandings of the capacity for change.

A heightened awareness to discrete encounters between individual bodies is not only valuable for understanding specific group dynamics. Scrutiny of isolated intra-actions can also elucidate how much wider cultural phenomena and societal changes are affected. This is validated by an empirical case study that interrogates the sensation of holding two contradictory subjectivities in relation to gentrification of Cornwall (Dawney, 2013). In this study an experiential account is given of the researcher who regularly visits Cornwall to go walking during the summer. The researcher at first describes her enjoyment of the walk and the emotional comfort, and sense of belonging she experiences in the Cornish countryside. This experience is then interrupted, however, as she encounters some graffiti on a fence in an empty field. The graffiti simply reads 'english out'. The study elucidates to what extent encountering written text in a isolated location can affect an individual. The study explicates the encounter as an intensity that produces a flow of sensations. The sensation of *belonging* the researcher was experiencing is now in conflict with a new sensation, one of *being unwelcome*. Experiencing conflicting identities in this manner - in this case both someone who *belongs* and also is *unwelcome* - is often referred to as possessing a *schizoid subjectivity* (Renold & Ringrose, 2011). The term explicates how individual humans are not determined entities or fixed subjects but emerge through their intra-actions with other entities and can therefore possess multiple subjectivities. Furthermore, this emergence is extended to the material landscape, how *place* is able to produce affective attachments to different individuals, groups and events across time. The political gravitas is evident when one considers how far these kind of intensities and felt sensations can spread, especially when harnessed through social and political campaigns.

Attending to less tangible intensities and felt sensations expands what a grassroots organisation is able to engage with and regulate within their everyday practice. For instance, a common virtuality that is often associated with gentrification is nostalgia - a fond association to a past experience. It is insufficient to say nostalgia is positive or damaging. More nuanced understandings are required to understand how such virtualities connect with wider cultural phenomena. In the case of nostalgia, it is argued that there are two dominant kind: *reflective* nostalgia and *restorative* nostalgia (Vallee, 2011). Reflective nostalgia 'places historical narratives at a distance for ironic appropriation' and restorative nostalgia is a desire to restore and 'reconstruct the lost past' (ibid: 88). Reflective nostalgia is elucidated well by a study analysing a researcher's encounter with a mug in a tourist shop in Berlin (Hui, 2011). The mug celebrates the now non-existence East Berlin, as a place of artistic cultural importance. By analysing this encounter, the research identifies a reflective nostalgia. The mug is kitsch; it celebrates the past but only as an ironic appropriation

of the past. There is no actual desire to return to the past. If one, however, considers the phrase 'english out' in the case of the walker in Cornwall, it is clear that there is a restorative nostalgia being expressed, an urge to restore a past, when Cornwall experienced a lower influx of *outsiders*. Isolated encounters with kitsch mugs and graffiti on fences may appear relatively mundane but they act as valuable access points to much wider phenomena. The kind of restorative nostalgia expressed by the 'english out' graffiti is equally present in a baseball cap, emblazoned with the slogan 'Make America Great Again.' Discrete encounters between humans and material objects can contribute to wider *affective atmospheres*, such as populist movements and right-wing rhetoric. Recent years have demonstrated that if one wants to understand the pedigree or potential of a political campaign, it is not enough to scrutinise party policies and manifestos. There is far more scope that goes beyond human experience that must be accounted for. Cultural phenomena and political issues are more complex than a linear cause and effect rationality would posit. There is a need to attend to the affective relations and discrete encounters that emerge between human, non-human and material entities.

Progressing beyond thinking of space as an empty container filled with distinct individuals and beings impacts how we consider regulation. In the same way embodied facilitation enables one to consider affective relations of vulnerability, an expanded empiricism reveals what other affective relations – both enabling and limiting – might be formed through our engagement with the world. What is perhaps most important to contemplate is how this reconfiguration of causality affects ideas of regulation and one's own role as a researcher; as a community actor; or as an activist. The notion of *intra-actions* challenges the idea that agency is the exclusive realm of humans and radically reconfigures normative ideas of causality. The description of intra-activity relates to a wider notion of agential realism given by feminist theorist Karen Barad. Agential realism refers to an 'epistemological-ontological-ethical framework' that is put forward to provide 'an understanding of the role of human *and* non-human, material *and* discursive, and natural *and* cultural factors in scientific and other social-material practices' (2007: 26). Within this notion Barad contends that one must confront the role of the researcher and our tools of measurement and capture. More specifically, Barad refutes any separation of the ontological from the epistemological, stating that 'we don't obtain knowledge by standing outside the world; we know because we are *of* the world.' (ibid: 185). Furthermore, 'our knowledge-making practices are social-material enactments that contribute to, and are part of, the phenomena we describe.' (ibid: 26). If one considers these claims against the examples I have surveyed in this section: the walker does not observe sensations of exclusion, these are created through intra-actions; the person attending the World Social Forum does not measure feelings of hope that would have been there, instead they participate in the intensity (sharing of testimonials) that affects the virtuality of hope. Agential realism disrupts any binary separation between human/non-human, subject/object,

mind/body, matter/discourse. What is at stake is that it alters how we perceive our tools of engagement in research. It asserts that when we interrogate gentrification through coproduced film practice, we are actively affecting the very thing we are seeking to engage with. The significance is that this opens up the possibility for Coexist to experiment with how they can engage and regulate space beyond the Hamilton House building. We can extend our coproduced film practice and affect relations of vulnerability in new spaces.

3.2 Reconfiguring Gentrification

Radically reconfiguring causality affects how Coexist can critically interrogate gentrification through their regulatory processes. Gentrification can be defined as the production of space for progressively more affluent users (Hackworth, 2002). A central concern has been the displacement of lower income groups and more vulnerable individuals at the expense of these processes. The issue of gentrification is a prominent concern amongst grassroots regeneration projects in general but it has become an increasing point of focus for how the Stokes Croft area is represented in online and public newspapers (Guardian, 2015; Vice, 2014; 2017; Independent, 2017). What is particularly salient is that Coexist have been regularly attributed with enabling a more modern version of gentrification. Gentrification as a process has continuously changed and adapted since the 1970s (Lees, 2008). Initially it was a process that occurred with individual property owners but it is now more common for savvy corporate developers to be involved in early stages (Smith & Hackworth, 2001; Hackworth, 2002). Furthermore, there is now less emphasis on waiting for an area to become 'tamed' before more affluent groups move because there is an increasing desire for areas to sustain a sense of *edginess* (Hackworth, 2002; Lees, 2008). Since the 1990s it has been noted that people want an element of 'poverty, drugs, danger and subversive culture' to remain in a 'symbolic and sanitized form' (Pruijt, 2003: 11). This marketing of counter-culture practice is also identifiable in council-driven projects that aim to increase investment and tourism through 'creative city' initiatives (Chatterton, 2000; Erdem, 2014), the most prominent criticism being that the brand of creativity promoted limits the space for more politically-minded or subjugated perspectives (McLean, 2014a; 2014b; Boyd, 2010). A similar criticism is levied at organisations such as Coexist who rent space in an official capacity from property developers. Accusations are made that organisations working in an official capacity only deliver a sanitised and profitable version of a radical aesthetic; they are not politicised in the way that squatting movements and social centres are by the very act of reclaiming private space and opening it up to the community, (Pruijt, 2003). Yet this kind of accusation does not acknowledge the various reasons why groups or collectives will make the tactical compromise of working within an official capacity (Uitermark, 2004; Hodkinson & Chatterton, 2007).

Radical geographers have regularly challenged assertions that gentrification can be so neatly attributed to specific groups. There has been a call to foreground the diverse fragmentation of radical movements, who have performed in various legal capacities (Uitmermark, 2004). It has also been argued that more focus should be given to the lack of a shared strategy to show how social change on a grassroots level can 'develop infrastructure which can promote autonomy from capitalism while preserving a diversity of perspectives.' (Hodkinson & Chatterton, 2007: 314). Coexist offer an example of the complexities involved. As an organisation, Coexist did not form from a previously more radical entity, yet there were very conscious of the radical movements that had already occurred within the Stokes Croft area. Coexist's own core purpose – to co-create spaces with the communities that surround us – closely aligns with the strategy of radical social centres; to provide alternate spaces as a means to counteract an increasingly pervasive consumer culture and the reduction of communal spaces. Coexist's economic model is designed to enable low-cost hire of spaces for meetings and workshops to encourage the cross-pollination of ideas. In doing so, Hamilton House has hosted various activist groups, such as UK Tar Sands, Frack-Free Bristol, Ad Blockers, and many more. Coexist have themselves actively participated in community campaigns to prevent the introduction of a Tesco store in the Stokes Croft area and the renovation of a heritage site into luxury flats.

The appeal of attending to the virtual and emergent aspects of the gentrification phenomenon is that it might enable new ways of understanding what is happening in these spaces and therefore potentially offer new trajectories of change. It felt important for the wellbeing of the Coexist team, to give time and space to reflect on the role of grassroots organizations in processes of gentrification, otherwise restrictive narratives and accusations will come to dominate the debate. Coexist are regularly accused of causing gentrification in the public domain of Bristol. These accusations can have a negative impact on Coexist team members wellbeing and sense of agency. Expressions of anxiety and frustration are often made by team members with regard to their the schizoid subjectivity engendered by performing the contradictory roles of both victims and assailants of gentrification. There is therefore a need to confront Coexist's role in these processes but to do so in a way that goes beyond oversimplified cause and effect narratives. One way of disrupting these restrictive narratives is to engage with the gentrification phenomenon and observe how it 'takes shape and gains expression in shared experiences, everyday routines, fleeting encounters, embodied movements' in the different spaces in Stokes Croft (Lorimer, 2005:84).

3.3 Reconfiguring Space as an Ecology of Affect through Film: *Conversations in Neon* (2016)

PLEASE WATCH *CONVERSATIONS IN NEON* (2016) FILM



Figure 3.1: Screenshot from *Conversations in Neon* (2016)

The film *Conversations in Neon* (2016) was conceptualised while spending time away from the Coexist team and the Hamilton House building. I had wanted to engage with the Stokes Croft area as an ecology; to interrogate how virtualities and sensations associated with processes of gentrification can emerge through encounters between human, non-human and material objects. Somewhat serendipitously, the Stokes Croft area experienced the arrival of two red neon signs, positioned on opposite sides of the street. The two red neon signs were distinct but dim during the day. However, as the sun set, the hue of their lights would cast across the Stokes Croft street. If it were to ever rain, the reflected light from each neon sign would catch and stretch across the wet tarmac, almost reaching one another in the centre of the road. While the material presence of these two red neon signs were highly visible, their intensities and the sensations they affected were less easily perceived. The presence of each sign seeming to stake a claim for the contested space. One red neon sign, that was positioned on the side of the street opposite Hamilton House, was an advertising board for a recently opened Meat Liquor, a London-based international restaurant chain. Across the street,

and fitted above the entrance to Hamilton House, was the other red neon sign, an artwork by Shaun Badham, installed as part of the Bristol Biennial Festival. The artwork proclaimed the provocative statement 'I'm Staying'. While the two red neon signs were synthetically the same, they nonetheless connected with a divergent series of ideas, intentions and feelings. The arrival of the Meat Liquor restaurant seemed to generate suspicion and a degree of animosity amongst some people who regularly use the Stokes Croft area. The arrival of the restaurant was not met with the same protests that a Tesco store had in 2011¹⁷. The introduction of a Tesco on a small high street made up of independent shops was deemed unwelcome by a collection of individuals and community groups. A peaceful protest escalated into three consecutive nights of rioting after the arrival of police officers in full riot gear. The contrast in reaction toward the Meat Liquor was in itself worthy of contemplation: perhaps the Meat Liquor restaurant is not viewed in the same light as Tesco? Or maybe community groups have become despondent with the lack of success with previous campaigns? The most notable grievance toward the Meat Liquor concerned the carefully marketed faux-DIY aesthetic the building displayed. The restaurant was covered in graffiti-tags and re-purposed materials, suggesting the restaurant strived to merge seamlessly with other grassroots projects that already existed in the area.



Figure 3.2: *I'm Staying* (2014) artwork by Shaun C Badham: Photo taken of artwork when installed on Hamilton House in 2016, image provided by Shaun C Badham.

¹⁷ More information regarding the protests against Tesco can be found at: <https://notesco.wordpress.com>



Figure 3.3: Image of the advertising sign for Meat Liquor, taken during a shoot for the film *Conversations in Neon* (2016)

Curious about the affecting presence of these two red neon signs, I agreed to conduct an open interview with the artists Shaun Badham at the official unveiling of the I'm Staying artwork at Hamilton House (26.09.15). A group discussion arose with members of the audience about how the two seemingly similar signs seemed to be engaging in a symbolic conversation between the arguably fading radical spirit of the area and the recent arrival of big business. It was noted that the artwork's defiant message evokes the resilience of radical practice, determined to stay and reclaim space, whereas the advertising sign of the Meat Liquor, with its faux-DIY aesthetic, represents the cultural appropriation of such radical practice by large-scale capitalist business. Yet there are more layers to this dynamic. After all, Coexist have themselves been accused of appropriating radical practice. It would suggest that the arrival of Meat Liquor has changed the perception of Hamilton House and the Coexist project. Coexist are now positioned as the under threat radical element that they were once accused of appropriating themselves.

Occupied with thoughts of how the arrival of material objects can affect new sensations and ideas within the gentrification phenomenon, I began by conducted several short interviews with individuals asking for their own perspective on the red neon signs in Stokes Croft. I was keen to learn in what ideas the

I'm Staying artwork provoked. I interviewed three members of the urban regeneration charity Artspace/Lifespace, who had previously founded and participated with the Invisible Circus theatre troupe (Interview at the Island, Doug Francisco: 26/02/2016). Doug Francisco related the *I'm Staying* artwork to his own experience with squatting movements and grassroots action. Francisco reaffirmed the importance of temporality and transience when discussing any social or political movement and development:

I'm staying... (laughter). I like the artwork I'm staying because it sort of suggests that we are indeed staying. But asks who we are? And what I am? So it poses as many questions as it does answers. What stays and what remains in the whole wave of what's become such a popular thing I suppose... Personally for me it kind of evokes the whole notion of what's temporary and what's transitory and what comes along and fills in the gaps. Coming from the occupation of spaces by artists, I suppose from way back when, probably from prehistoric times! (laughter) And the whole squatting kind of movement being a very transient and temporary thing, but a very creative thing, but also a very destructive thing. So you have both sides of that whole conundrum. So I like it cos it suggests that that creativity is staying in some way, but by that creativity staying it also drives itself out, because it attracts... it attracts money and development, and wealthier people that like to enjoy the art or the artistic experience that's created by... maybe, certainly in the squatting sense, for people without the resources.

As Francisco began to discuss how social movements change and dissipate, he was also quick to refute the tendency for restorative nostalgia. By addressing the situation that grassroots creativity often attracts market-led development, he spoke fondly of the past but also dismissed any desire to restore the past. Instead, Francisco emphasised the importance of staying and adapting:

But you've seen that happen kind of everywhere, all over London and stuff, so it's interesting to think about where it's going as well as where it's staying. And how artists are attracted... and now it's kind of acknowledged that artists bring on a wave of development, if you like, some call it 'gentrification'... and how the people who lived in those really poor areas, how they feel about that 'gentrification' or whatever you want to call it - development or regeneration - you know a lot of the people that live there are quite happy for a bit of that to happen. Because maybe before it was riddled with crime, and vice, and drug problems and all that kind of stuff. And I think that capitalism capitalises on that creativity

basically. And then it's down to those people that come in to decide what they want to make out of that really...

And the creativity has to... creativity is very raw when it takes over a downtrodden place, or a poor place, or a broken place, and then when it kind of becomes a bit successful, it's easy to become comfortable, and a bit complacent, and a bit meaningless maybe. So it's down to us really, the responsibility is on us to make it meaningful, and to stay and create something new and something positive from that. So I try not to get too bitter and caught up with... you know... 'oh it was better back in the day'... it was always better back-in-the-day for those people that were there back-in-the-day, and for those people that weren't there back-in-the-day this is the day that will be referred to as back-in-the-day for new people that come along. So it's our responsibility for us to stop it becoming meaningless. And there's no point in hanging around and moaning about how it's become... you have to kind of embrace that, and engage that... so I think, we could all just move somewhere poor again, and people will and people do, but there's also kind of like, that's a defeatist attitude, where you go 'oh yeah, now this has happened we've gotta move on and find somewhere else.

Francisco's description rejects the notion that there was a more stable period in the past that was somehow lost or taken away. Instead, he evokes the past as being as contingent and transient as any present situation. Finally Francisco reaffirms the politics of embedded within continuously adapting to an ever-changing environment:

You know, you have to stand your ground, and do your bit, and put your message out, and try and.... if you're gonna stay, stay with something positive and make it change and make it different. And that's the whole... from the tiny little situation you have in your little community or your little place to the wider world situation. This is the battle we fight when we stay.

The interview with Francisco underlined the unrelenting challenge of grassroots action, not only the ideas he shared but also with his delivery. Francisco can seamlessly flow from different opinions and questions, whether they are his own or the commonly made assertions of other people. The accelerated pace at which he often spoke in this interview evoked the sheer force of energy required to attend to the ongoing challenges of grassroots action, whether from his earlier time spent within the Bristol squatting movement during the early-to-mid-2000s or working in an official capacity with his current registered charity,

Artspace-Lifespace. The most salient point I took from this interview was how the notion of resistance must be understood as itself changeable and adaptable. Like all other unfolding virtual and material relations entangled within an ecology, resistance and political attitudes will and must keep adapting in relation to new situations as they emerge. The capacities for change at ones disposable are not stable but continuously appearing and disappearing. Therefore, even the act of *staying* requires constant movement and change.

I conducted another interview with a fellow PhD student who hot-desks at Hamilton House and recently joined Coexist's board of non-executive directors (Interview, Aurelie Broeckerhof: 26/01/2016). Aurelie Broeckerhof had been conducting interviews with different generations of residents from the Stokes Croft area as part of her research. I was keen to learn how Aurelie considered the arrival of the Meat Liquor. Aurelie stated that:

I think... like I said already... I think Meat Liquor isn't Tesco, it isn't a big multinational, so I think it's interesting how that has incited quite a strong conversation or quite a passionate conversation amongst people who move in Stokes Croft, people who use the space. And I've kind of tried to reflect on it, and one of the things I've come to wonder is that, looking at the people I've spoken with, the ones that have responded the most strongly, appear to be the ones who were also part of the previous change that happened in Stokes Croft. And I wonder if some of it is their own guilt in the change that has come to the area, and their role with it, of which they see the Meat Liquor a manifestation of the next stage. But they kind of, somewhere deep down inside, know that they were kind of a part of kick starting that change...

When asked about the potential dichotomy between the two red neon signs, Aurelie continued:

People will always say to me, 'Oh there was nothing here, there was nothing here, and then the Canteen¹⁸ opened and it was a great place.' And you know that's a colonial discourse: The new world, you know, there was nothing here and then this new thing happened, and then the new world, or there was nothing there, it's all new. Well of course not, there was stuff there that was happening, so I think that that colonial discourse, has happened, and has been identified at a previous stage. Unfortunately, Meat Liquor is now the kind of... a much more in-your-face exemplar of something that was maybe more subtle before.

¹⁸ Public bar and restaurant at the bottom of Hamilton House.

What I found enlightening in this interview with Aurelie was how she foregrounded the rigidity of some of the narratives surrounding gentrification. There is an evident myopia in the sense that some people are unable to think too far back into the past - in part demonstrating how urban processes eschewed the virtual Yet there is also a myopia of the present moment. There is a tendency amongst people to follow a binary narrative that positions the grassroots against the big business - a David versus Goliath scenario - offers little opportunity for revealing the small moments of resistance and capacities for change that are present. It was valuable discussing the situation with people who are regularly immersed in these conversations and can offer some reflective scope. I now wanted to engage more directly within the Stokes Croft ecology, move beyond discourse and engage with the virtual and material relations entangled in the gentrification phenomenon. Moreover, consider how Coexist might engage with these aspects of the phenomenon away from the Hamilton House building.

3.3.1 Manipulating the Social Fabric



Figure 3.4: Photo of Social Sculpture *Conversations in Thread* (2016) held in the Bearpit underpass of central Bristol.

A social sculpture was facilitated in the Bearpit of Bristol to enable us to directly engaged with the material and virtual relations embedded within processes of gentrification. It was an opportunity to reconfigure notions of regulation and gentrification; moving beyond the idea that Coexist are a fixed entity and instead foregrounding how they emerge through intra-actions with other entities in space. The Bearpit is a contested space located at the bottom of Stokes Croft. The space acts as an underpass for a major roundabout in the centre of Bristol. Four wide pedestrian subways lead into an open central clearance. The space is sunk beneath the traffic, with inclined banks, covered in grass and cement, leading up to the street level above. The name *the Bearpit* is apt for a place that evokes the architecture of a Roman colosseum, where crowds would sit on raked seating to watch tense bloodsports in the pit beneath. Yet a different sort of tension plays out here. In recent years this space has experienced a combination of council-driven development and grassroots regeneration. The rapid change and the contrasting desires for what kind of change is needed has caused tensions between the new cafes, pop-up shops, ping-pong tables and a well-established street-drinking and homeless culture that exists in the space. There has been a vocalised desire to make the space more safe and appealing for commuters. A community interest company, the Bearpit Improvement Group (B.I.G.) formed to manage the arrival of shops and invite guerilla gardening projects to regenerate the surrounding banks. Alongside this action, the council have drastically altered the structural design, introducing two open sets of steps, enabling commuters the option of avoiding the subways where homeless people regularly sleep, busk and beg. The development and regeneration of the space has done little to improve the lives of the homeless community, the street-drinkers or the drug-users who frequent the area. What the development has produced is more restrictions on the vulnerable communities. Public toilets are closed earlier, leading to more instances of public urination and defecation, which in turn leads to police sanctions. Surveillance has increased, with shopkeepers and the police working in tandem to monitor the behaviour of the vulnerable communities. The palpable sense of tension engulfing the space manifests in small-scale confrontations on a daily basis. The Bearpit is therefore a space of conflict and dissent.

The contested space offered an opportunity to directly engage with virtual and material relations attached to the gentrification phenomenon. We wanted our engagement with this ecology to inform the coproduced film *Conversations in Neon* (2016). It was our chance to not only observe the gentrification phenomenon but also be apart of the phenomenon through our tools of engagement. Our willingness to immerse ourselves within the dynamics of the space led to the social sculpture *Conversation in Thread* being performed as an intervention within the Bearpit. The term social sculpture was coined by the performance artist Joseph Beuys, it refers to an expanded conception of art. Similar to how one might sculpt clay, there is an emphasis on *manipulating the social fabric* through this process. It is concerned with deepening people's capacity to understand and connect with the world by developing new organs of

perception. The social sculpture *Conversations in Thread* was created and facilitated by Daniel Balla, a director of Coexist and founding director of the activist CoResist collective. Passers-by were invited to continue a thread of conversation, by participating in creating a *lemniscate* between two points. In algebraic geometry, a lemniscate is any of several figure-eight or ∞ -shaped curves, commonly associated with the infinity symbol. The word comes from the Latin *lēm̄niscātus* meaning 'decorated with ribbons'. Participants were invited to weave a ribbon - or more specifically gold coloured thread - in a figure of eight formation between two lamp posts in the centre of the Bearpit. As participants moved through the space, unravelling the roll of golden thread in their hand, we asked them to share their own perspective on the rapid change that has occurred both in the Bearpit and in the wider Stokes Croft area. The social sculpture manipulates the social configurations of a space, entwining material and discursive relations into the social fabric. The social sculpture therefore aligns with the theoretical stance of agential realism, that our tools of engagement and 'our knowledge-making practices are social-material enactments that contribute to, and are part of, the phenomena we describe.' (Barad, 2007: 26).

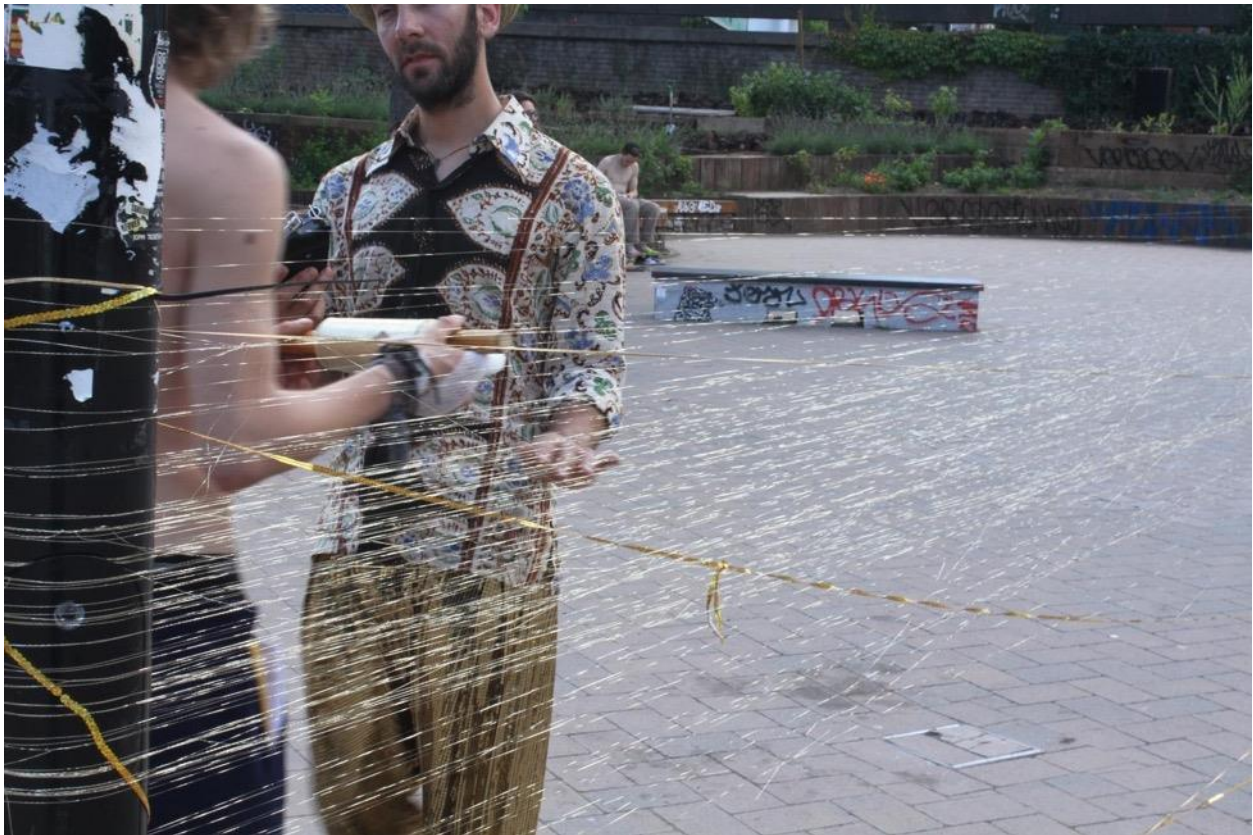


Figure 3.5: Photo of Social Sculpture *Conversations in Thread* (2016) held in the Bearpit underpass of central Bristol.

The disruption to human and material relations produced by a social sculpture are often overtly visible. *Conversations in Thread* (2016) enabled an activity that any person moving in and through the space could participate, regardless of economic status or background. Yet consideration was also given to discursive relations. In preparation for this social sculpture we had discussed deliberately avoiding the term gentrification when engaging participants. If the social sculpture already created a material disruption, we wanted this disruption to extend to language. We wanted to divert away from habitual discourses. In doing so, we wanted to encourage participants to consider more discrete encounters and moments of change they experience in the everyday. In place of the term gentrification we instead asked participants to discuss what they felt the words 'disruption' and 'development' express in relation to everyday life. These words were chosen to deliberately strip back ideas of gentrification to different forms of movement; fleeting disruptions and sustained development. It was only once we had asked participants to express their ideas about the notions of disruption and development in general that we then asked how they felt these terms related to the Bearpit and Bristol as a whole. In total we spoke to approximately 50-60 people over the course of five hours on one day. Some participants inevitably steered conversations back towards wider reflections on gentrification. These tended to be people who used the Stokes Croft area more than the Bearpit. For those people who live, work and play in the Bearpit, the conversations were grounded in moment-to-moment intra-actions of the space.

The social sculpture proved to be a relatively fluid and organic approach to engagement. As a team of three, we found that both regular users of the space and people only passing through were very willing to participate. There was often a situation in which one or two people were waiting at the side to *continue the thread* of conversation. The willingness of people to engage with the social sculpture threw up an interesting contrast with the lack of agency expressed by many participants while being interviewed. The presence and absence of nostalgia and hope was certainly notable. Nostalgia and hope are both important in terms of agency. If nostalgia is a virtuality that looks backwards to the past, hope is a forward thinking virtuality, that attempts to connect the present moment with a projected future. What this social sculpture revealed was how the hope some people held for the future was being weighed down by previous experience. This was particularly notable amongst participants working in the community sector. One middle-aged male participant stated how he hoped for a 'value-based process' in which councils 'actually let the people who live here and want to live here determine what buildings, what spaces are needed' (Audio Transcript: Social Sculpture: 18/07/16) Yet the hope he expressed was belied by his assessment of the current situation, the 'either or situation' paradigm in which you either keep an area the same or improve it, with the latter option meaning 'bring the rich people in and make the poor people move out' (ibid). Similarly, another community member offered a more inclusive approach that could be adopted: 'Stop telling a community what they

want.... When actually you need is to go in and get them to identify what they feel is missing or what barriers are to them going and speaking to their neighbours... and actually go in and facilitate that happening'(ibid). These participants directed their frustration toward a somewhat abstract notion of the council and business sector.

Participants who expressed nostalgia were more prone to target their frustration toward specific buildings, organisations or groups of people. The change to the area was often attributed to certain groups of people moving in, especially by slightly older participants who had perhaps grown up in and around Stokes Croft a decade previously. One participant described how Stokes Croft has become a 'hipster hang out'. Another participant compounded this statement with more disparaging remarks. While lamenting the decrease in squatter movements, the person stated 'compared to how it used to be there's a lot of twats... boring, sad people. People who think they're making a statement. That's not how it should be' (ibid). The latter contribution certainly evoked a sense of animosity and anger toward certain groups of people. In this case the person attached blame to this group of people for supposedly diluting the counterculture dynamic attached to the area. Other participants focused their attention on the arrival of specific chain-businesses - such as Meat Liquor and the Caribbean-inspired restaurant chain Turtle Bay. They were more concerned with how aspects of culture they liked were being repurposed and sold back to the city. One participant described the Meat Liquor as the 'cultural appropriation of almost our own culture in Bristol' (ibid). There was a despondency in tone to this statement, with the participant laughing at the absurdity of the situation as he spoke. The contributions made by participants expressing how they view notions of disruption and development in relation to Stokes Croft and Bristol were illuminating but ultimately remained relatively generalised. While not necessarily providing specific moments of resistance and change, attending to the virtual can enable our understandings of how cultural phenomena such as gentrification emerge as an affective atmosphere.

We were able to engage with the more discrete textures of everyday life when speaking with people who regularly use and move through the Bearpit space - as a place to work, sleep and play. We spoke with traders, individuals from the homeless and street-drinking communities, as well as members of the Bearpit Improvement Group about how they understood disruption and development relating to their everyday experience of the space. It was through these conversations that we were able to identify more discrete moments of change and resistance. A trader who runs a stall in the Bearpit participated in the social sculpture and she was quick to relate notions of disruption and development to her daily routine:

Development? When I think of the word... the thing that comes to mind is that renewing of what was old and not relevant anymore. That kind of moving-on to improve things. Disruption? Disruption would be probably things that disrupt me in my daily working life. Anti-social behaviour, drug addicts, alcoholics. Yeah it's a disruption definitely.

(Bearpit Trader extract from Social Sculpture Audio Transcription: 18/07/16)

The trader recognised how the situation in the Bearpit and the struggles of the vulnerable communities related to much wider issues of capitalist culture. When prompted whether this wider understanding helped her during her everyday dealings with the vulnerable communities, she said:

I think just the sheer amount of abuse and things that we have to deal with on a daily basis has kind of made you numb to the understanding of that. And people do choose, at the end of the day, how they choose to respect people. And we do work with a lot of support services, who do try to help people, and they... I'd say there's 30% of people who don't actually want that help and then it's like well what can you do about that, it's quite tricky. You almost feel pressurised into solving the world's problems. But then as you get older you do realise there are some people you just can't really help, they have to help themselves at the end of the day.

(Bearpit Trader extract from Social Sculpture Audio Transcription: 18/07/16)

There was a similar attitude expressed by a member of the Bearpit Improvement Group, a willingness to work with vulnerable communities that has perhaps been worn down overtime. When Danny asked the member of B.I.G. If they had attempted to include individuals from the street-drinking culture within their plans:

Yeah we have, we don't get a lot of positive responses from them. And the trouble is that because of some of their hostile responses to some of the traders here. Those are our most important elements in the Bearpit, really, because they do make it welcoming to everybody really... I am unhappy with street-drinkers or anyone. You know, the skateboarders can sometimes be disruptive if there's a lot of pedestrian traffic. But we've encouraged them to be here because we think it's a good space for them. We encourage everyone to be here, as long as they respect other people.

(B.I.G. Member extract from Social Sculpture Audio Transcription: 18/07/16)

It seems that people involved in the regeneration do believe they have tried as much as they can with the vulnerable communities but have simply been rejected. Yet one could also note, to an extent, that the conclusions reached by both the trader and member of Bearpit Improvement Group, did suggest the issue lies with either a lack of *respect* or an unwillingness for people to *help themselves*. For them the issue did not relate to the material changes of the space but more concerned the moral character of some individuals.

Reducing exclusion to an individual's moral character or personal choice creates a simplified cause and effect narrative that ignores the complex entanglement of power relations embedded in such situations. To enable more thorough interrogation of the issue, it is helpful to analyse the encounters between humans and material objects that have been affected by the regeneration project and council-driven changes. Therefore, rather than begin with the intentions of one group of people, in this case the council or B.I.G., instead scrutinise the changes to the material landscape and what material and virtual relations these changes have generated. It is, for instance, difficult to identify any change that has been made to the Bearpit space that generates positive encounters with people associated with these various vulnerable communities directly. I spoke with a young male adult who describes himself as sleeping in the Bearpit as well as using the space to sell and use drugs. With regards the regeneration strategy he stated:

All they ever want to do to enable any sort of community bonding, is one ping pong table and a couple of plants. You get more interaction in the toilets when you're having a piss and say hello to someone. There is no way these businesses would sort us out for food if we were starving hungry. Perhaps they want to start doing that, perhaps they want to start wasting a little bit less, and give a little bit more. And then perhaps they'd get more respect off us.

(Member of Homeless community, extract from Social Sculpture Audio Transcription: 18/07/16)

The individuals challenged the regeneration discourse of the Bearpit Improvement Group. If one surveys the Bearpit space, the ping-pong table, the community garden, it is clear that these decisions were made by informed designers. Yet *who* they were designed for is less clear. They certainly do not seem designed for the homeless community. In fact, the individual I spoke with stated that he viewed these changes to the material landscape as a deliberate and direct challenge to his and his community's presence in the space:

All this stuff there, is pretty and nice, but it's never gonna be appreciated because most people walk around when they see us lot. So the only way you're ever gonna get any

appreciation for any garden or art is to move us lot out but you never will though cos we're too well established. Well, wildflower don't care where they grow do they?...

...and face it, everyone that sits behind me is heavily hit with mental health issues brought on from a young age yet we all bond in a way that we're untouchable.

(Member of Homeless community, extract from Social Sculpture Audio Transcription: 18/07/16)

Hearing this man's statements, it was interesting to consider how encounters with material objects like ping-pong tables and plants can affect different sensations. In this case, these material changes have affected collective resilience amongst the vulnerable communities. Could the changes made to curtail homeless and street drinking culture actually have the reverse effect? The young man described how 'they will never push us out.' The arrival of the regeneration project has therefore been responsible for constructing an 'us and them' dichotomy. The fact that this dichotomy is felt by these vulnerable communities is significant, whether or not this was the B.I.G.'s intention. A representative of the B.I.G. we spoke to stated:

Them feeling that they're being pushed out. But that's not our intention or never has been.

Our intention is just to make it more diverse and more welcoming to everybody.

(B.I.G. Member, extract from Social Sculpture Audio Transcription: 18/07/16)

Yet this simply demonstrates how causality goes beyond the specific intentions of individuals and organisations. One could explicate that for any market-led development or grassroots led regeneration, there needs to be more contingency planning for when unpredictable negative things happen.

Attending to the Bearpit space as an ecology enables one to scrutinise the strategy and planning of any group, whether a large developer or a grassroots organisation. The purpose is not create a situation where one cannot act for risk of excluding another group and therefore find themselves in a state of ethical paralysis. The ineffectiveness of only attending to issues of exclusion when assessing regeneration projects has been argued extensively elsewhere (Koch & Latham, 2012). It is certainly important to seek positive moments of change yet this does not alleviate the responsibility of safeguarding against potential harm to vulnerable communities. A concern is that some of the people attached to these vulnerable communities are perceived as being beyond repair or lost. As the Bearpit trader stated:

They're so damaged. And I don't just say that as an outsider, I've experienced this in my own family... if they're not going to help themselves, then there's nothing I can do to pull them out.

(Bearpit Trader, extract from Social Sculpture Audio Transcription: 18/07/16)

If the situation is reduced to binaries of being included or excluded, choosing to participate or not, this creates a restrictive narrative. There is a dangerous risk to discourse that positions the addict as a fixed subject not willing to choose to be included. If one reaffirms that there is nothing that can be done or 'nothing I can do to pull them out' it represents the person as stable, fixed subject. Yet change is always possible, therefore a pertinent concern, I would contend, should be what further damage might be done to these vulnerable individuals? One insidious strain being placed on these vulnerable individuals regarded the increased surveillance. The individual I was speaking with was clearly agitated and sensed he and his peers were continuously being watched. Early on in our conversation he stated:

I live here all day and when I'm going to go to sleep I go to sleep. Piss, and shit in that toilet before it's closed. And everyone that walks through, you've got to know if they're undies, you gotta know that the middle one there talks to the old bill all the time and they do live in each other's pockets and they talk to themselves all the time. It's just what we do.

(Member of Homeless community, extract from Social Sculpture Audio Transcription: 18/07/16)

The term 'undies' refers to undercover police. It does seem that there has been an increased police presence since the regeneration project. Given the mental health conditions the young man alluded to, combined with regular drug use and withdrawal symptoms, the sensation of being constantly observed and monitored is not going to improve their mental health. At the close of our interview the participant directed me with his eyes to one of the traders:

You see, even now, there's always one of them watching.

(Member of Homeless community, extract from Social Sculpture Audio Transcription: 18/07/16)

There certainly was someone looking over but then that could easily relate to the conspicuous social sculpture we were facilitating. The man was clearly unsettled by the feeling of being watched. I argue that this demonstrates how regeneration or development plans do not attend enough to the virtual relations produced by change. Increased surveillances is assumed to curtail illegal activities, yet the feeling so paranoia induced by continuously being watched might well affect more volatile behaviour.

The actions of the grassroots organisation and council reveal how space continuously emerges through conflict and negotiation (Koch & Latham, 2012). Each of the 'improvements' made by the Bearpit Improvement Group seemed to exacerbate the presence of the vulnerable communities. The changes made the vulnerable communities' presence more pronounced, making them stand out more as not belonging in this public space. When I asked the young homeless man how he understood the term disruption, he described his own life as a disruption, as a 'disrupting normal society.' It is disheartening to see someone so instinctively perform the role of being outside of what is deemed *normal*. Yet I would argue this statement is also inaccurate. It would appear that some of his daily actions have only become disruptions after changes were made by the regeneration group. The plans and strategies of the council and regeneration group have led to his actions becoming more of an obstruction. Closing the public toilets earlier means there are more complaints about human defecation in the area. Introducing family orientated activities now means the behaviour of vulnerable communities is declared inappropriate for a family area. The presence of traders now means there are semi-permanent people with more of a right to the space.

The tensions engulfing the Bearpit space became apparent towards the end of the social sculpture. I had entered the public toilets, which were empty and fairly dank and dim compared with the bright open space I had been within during the day. After stepping back from a urinal, I moved toward a small rectangular island in the middle of the room hosting several sinks on each side. I was unsettled to realise there was no soap. As I moved around the island of sinks searching for soap, I instead encountered a used needle. It had been left abandoned, with blood flickered across the bowl of the sink. I stood in the empty restroom staring down at the sink. The encounter with this material object and traces of human life had affected a feeling of despondency and dejection. The sensations produced by this encounter affected me more than my conversations with participants. My previous suspicion toward the regeneration strategy gave way to empathy; it was suddenly obvious how the small moments of conflict and resistance occurring in the Bearpit related to much wider systemic failings. This viewpoint was expressed by a participant during the social sculpture who described himself as a recovering addict:

What I see now.... Bristol has kind of a big drug and alcohol problem but what they doing is that there's not that many services anymore, they're taking the services away, they're closing down the rehabs. People that come out of prison, they come out of prison, they come out of hospital and there's no help. So they go back to where they are. A prisoner comes out of prison, they walk into the off licence and start funding their crime again.

(Associate of Street Drinking culture, extract from Social Sculpture Audio Transcription: 18/07/16)

The idea that people have nowhere to go was a more desperate image that the defiant resilience to stay and claim space evoked by the previous member of the street-drinking community. The specific moments of conflict we observed during this social sculpture, alongside many for the testimonials, exposed the inadequacy of dominant narratives surrounding gentrification and cause and effect rationalities. There is no one group of people causing gentrification because humans are more diverse and entangled within another's lives that that narrative would suggest. Furthermore, a cause and effect rationality is dangerous because it implies something is already lost or at least already in the process of being lost. The social sculpture exposed the delicacy of some individuals situations; situations that can become better or worse depending on the myriad of intra-actions occurring within these spaces. It is therefore vital to engage with the more discrete encounters, the less tangible moments of change is to

3.3.2 Merging/Emerging through Superimposition



Figure 3.6: Screenshot taken from *Conversations in Neon* (2016) – The image shows neon light cutting through the scaffolding erected in the Bearpit as part of its architectural transformation.

The film *Conversations in Neon* (2016) interrogates the notion that grassroots regeneration projects seem to inevitably attract big business and market-led development. The film engages with the way in which virtual relations of nostalgia, guilt, anxiety and hope entangle with the material surroundings; how discrete encounters emerge as part of a wider affective atmosphere. I wanted to foreground the intra-actions that make up Stokes Croft as an ecology; to emphasise the capacities for change while elucidating how affective atmospheres are generated through discrete encounters. I particularly wanted to present virtualities and sensations expressed by participants during the social sculpture; to evoke the anxiety and anger of those vulnerable groups being pushed out; the guilt of those who feel they enabled such processes; the hope of those attempting to maintain a grassroots presence; and the frustration of those who have seen it all before.

The most distinguishing feature of the film *Conversations in Neon* is that it infuses all the action in the film within the red cascading light of the two neon signs. The film superimposes all images within the red light as a means of disrupting habitual ways of viewing the Stokes Croft area. I wanted the film to present the space from a new perspective to provoke new ideas and thoughts within the viewers. More specifically, I wanted to present Stokes Croft as an ecology, continually emerging through *intra-actions*. I therefore avoided representing space as being made up of distinct individual entities. I instead presented how things emerge with and through their intra-actions. To achieve this, I experimented with superimposition as a means of generating a new perspective of a familiar scene. Superimposition is a process in which images are layered on top of one another. It has been argued that superimposing images in film is a way of applying Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the *body-without-organs* within film (Powell, 2007). The term body-without-organs refers to a process of making new assemblages or connections beyond the boundaries of the human subject and representational modes of thinking (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). When representational modes of thought are distorted, it is possible to enter the realm of sensation. In art this is realised by moving beyond the *figurative* and into the *figural*. The figurative is when arts implies a direct 'relationship of an image to an object' that is being represented, where as the figural is when the artwork gains an autonomy beyond the object (Deleuze, 2002: 6). The figurative is realised when art implements representational, structural and semiotic systems to generate recognisable distinct shape (Powell, 2007). The figural attempts to move beyond these distinct forms. The ambition is to render the figure of a body, without figuration, but to do so without resorting to abstraction, in which representation is abandoned altogether (Bogue, 2003). Instead a trace of rhythm and line must be left (ibid). Superimposition enables such assemblages through dense layering of images which blends different shapes, colours and textures; the images merge together to produce something new. This merging of images is in contrast to editing, which keeps images distinct from one another.

Producing figural images through superimposition was a popular technique amongst structuralist materialist filmmakers of the 1960s. The films *Window Water Baby Moving* (1959) by Stan Brakhage and *Fuses* (1965) by Carolee Schneemann demonstrate how familiar everyday scenes can be reconfigured through film editing, thereby generating sensations in the viewing experience. The film *Window Water Baby Moving* (1959) does this by presenting the birth of the filmmaker's firstborn son. Brakhage emphasises shape and colour to defamiliarize the scene of childbirth and foreground the visceral sensations embedded within the scene. The film is composed of distinct close-ups of body parts colliding with more distorted, haptic images on the screen, thus generating a more tactile experience of childbirth. The same distortion of distinct figurations occurs in Schneemann's film *Fuses* (1965). The film is self-shot on 16mm and presents the lovemaking of Schneemann and her ex-partner. Schneemann's film deliberately disrupts a masculine, pornographic representation of a sexual encounter. The encounter is instead evoked by the layering and bonding of images on the screen. The way superimposition is implemented means that the film never falls



Figure 3.7: Screenshot from *Fuses* (1967) by Carolee Schneemann

into complete abstraction; flashes of more distinct body shapes appear before merging with other shapes. The viewer does not see two distinct individuals but threshold between bodies. This emergence of bodies is achieved in the film because superimposition bonds images more closely than montage (Powell, 2007).

It enhances the sensory viewing experience by replacing distinct, recognisable images with more tactile and distorted shapes.



Figure 3.8: Screenshot from *Fuses* (1967) by Carolee Schneemann

Superimposition is often an instinctive approach to editing. With montage - especially when the editor also shot the footage - there is a tendency to consider each shot as representing a scene or specific action. There is thought in one's mind of *knowing what that shot does*. Yet with superimposition, one is able to be more engaged with the moment-to-moment creation of a film. As an editor you combine different images and then must be alert to the movement and transformation; discover a rhythm that you can then manipulate. This process plays out in the opening sequence of *Conversations in Neon*. The film begins with footage of individuals commuting through the Stokes Croft space being cut through with the neon light. I found that the way the images merged on the screen gave the impression that the neon lights are white hot; that they are burning through the bodies as they walk past. This consideration affected how I approached layering the images. I was not only allowing the red light of the neon signs to cascade over bodies but also combining the heat of the light with other bodies; the heat of passing humans; hot car engines; the cold ground. Considering the images in terms of light and heat enabled another dimension to how I approached merging the material and the human.

To further distort the images I manipulated movement; cutting into the sequences, pausing and looping footage. I wanted to draw attention to the discrete movements that constitute place. In other words, rather than recognise a familiar scene of a person walking down the street, instead pay attention to the sway of the arm, the lifting up of a leg, the way a foot hits the ground. By breaking up the movement, it allows the viewer to disassociate with recognisable, distinct figurations. It is therefore easier to consider Image:

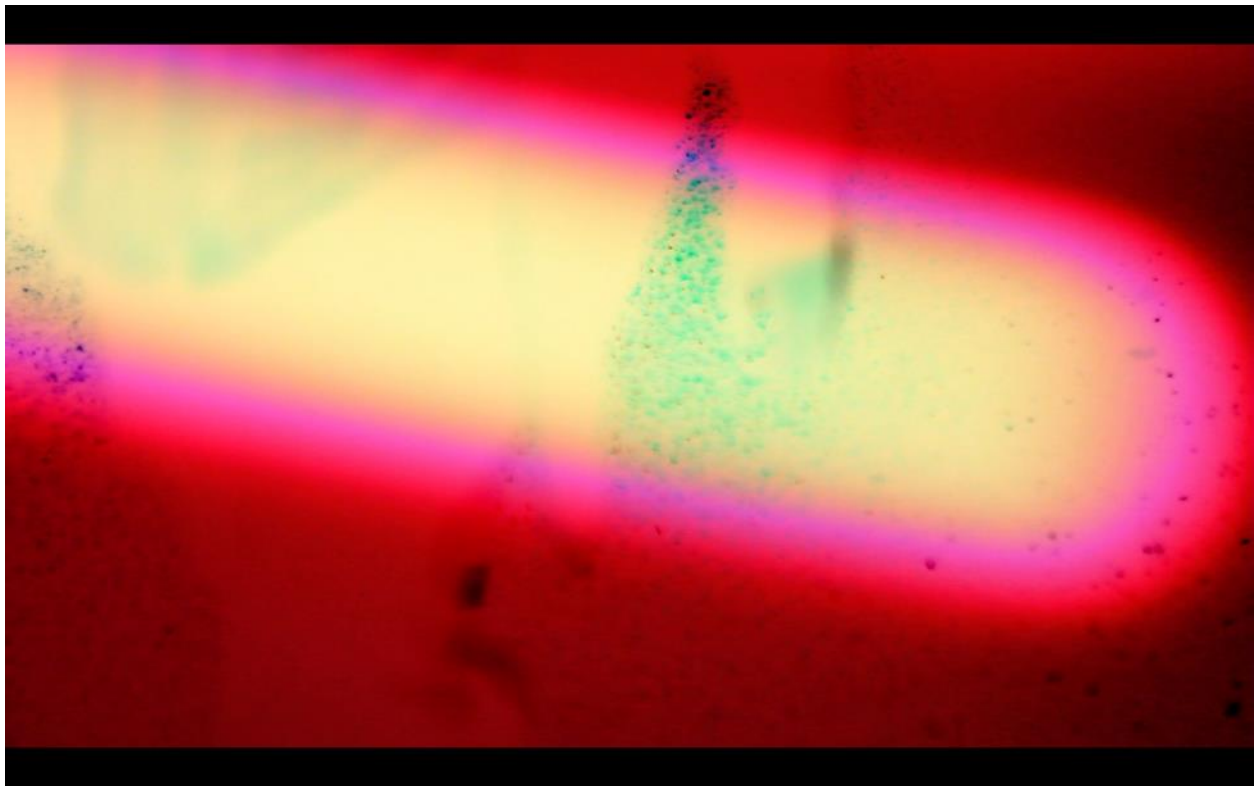


Figure 3.9: Screenshot taken from *Conversations in Neon* (2016) – Neon Burn

Stokes Croft as an emerging ecology; an entanglement of virtual and material relations. I use this method when I show a member of the guerilla gardening group at work. The movement of the gardener's foot on the shovel, as it breaks the ground, is cut into, frozen and looped. As the gardener's foot freezes on the shovel, other images are superimposed; images of large-scale development; graffiti displaying the anarchist symbol. It foregrounds the way in which both grassroots and market-led development affect change to the landscape; each provoking positive and negative impact.



Figure 3.10: Screenshot taken from *Conversations in Neon* (2016) – gardener at work in the Bearpit underpass

Manipulation of image and sound does not only occur while editing. Considerable attention was given to how to film the Stokes Croft space in a way that avoided cliché representations. This included how I approached recording sound as well as visuals. When I was editing the film, I treated the audio recordings on the soundtrack as if they were another material entity. Film practice will regularly dictate that sound recordings must be *clean* and not distorted in any way to be included in a film. This is in contrast to visual images, which can be distorted and blurry. I was, however, conscious that while I was including snippets of interviews, I wanted to avoid this film acting as a platform to *represent* diverse perspectives on a social issue. Conversely, I did not want to completely eradicate the importance of what people had shared and expressed during the social sculpture. I therefore had to negotiate how I edited the sound, leaving enough clarity so that viewers are able to maintain a thread, yet distorting the voices to an extent that forces the viewer to find meaning beyond the participants words; to consider the felt sensations attached to what they are saying. I therefore experimented with how I approached recording sound and visuals for the film. I had spent a day at the harbourside of Bristol experimenting with new filming methods, in an attempt to counteract my instinct for conventional filmmaking practice (See Appendix III). The experiments I conducted enabled a new approach to filming Stokes Croft; I moved through the street in an almost meditative state, using my camera to see and my microphone to listen. I was able to linger and be aware to the unfolding moment of different actions and sounds: passing bodies; circling birds; gusts of wind. There

was the rise and swell of bass tones from the engines of cars and buses; the light chatter of people passing by; the whips of bicycle wheels flicking puddles of water. Echoing above from a high window in the Hamilton House building was the distinct beat of African drums, dulled by the window and bricks interfering with the sound. While I listened to the sounds I realised the XLR cable connecting my external mic was loose and causing a crackle when I moved. I began deliberately playing with the cable, jolting it to and fro, embracing the sharp eruptions of distortion as a quality of my sensing equipment.



Figure 3.11: Screenshot taken from *Conversations in Neon* (2016) – Architectural transformation of the Bearpit

3.4 Conclusion

The impetus to affect a new understanding of how gentrification plays out in Stokes Croft enabled considerable progress with our approach to coproduction. The desire to embrace Stokes Croft as an ecology of affect led to us making use of the Coexist team's facilitation skills through the social sculpture *Conversations in Thread* (2016). This process enabled a thorough kind of engagement that would not have been possible through film practice alone. The social sculpture was a disruption to the everyday ways of existing in a contested space; it embodied the contention that we are a part of the phenomena we seek to understand (Barad, 2007). By conducting this social sculpture we were able to reveal the agency held within the Coexist team. The manner in which space was disrupted and refracted evoked the possibilities contained

within more experimental approaches to regulation. The film practice was a way of further foregrounding how individuals and locations continuously emerge through intra-actions; refuting the notion that processes of gentrification are inevitable, following a linear path with no potential for new trajectories. The film presents a perspective of Stokes Croft that reaches beyond an understanding of distinct entities inhabiting space as an empty container. Instead, it emphasizes the affective relations that continuously emerge between human, non-human and material entities. This entanglement of relations also includes virtualities, those entities that are real but not present. By exposing the myriad discrete encounters that emerge through space, the film emphasises that not every step of the gentrification phenomenon is predetermined. There is still the potential for productive and negative encounters. Coexist therefore have the agency to help facilitate and engender positive encounters through their regulatory processes.

CHAPTER FOUR

CUTTING AND FRAGMENTING SUSTAINABILITY

‘When we tell a story and represent a social practice or site, what kind of social world do we construct and endow with the force of representation? What are its possibilities, its mobilities and flows, its contiguities and interconnections, its permeabilities, its implications for other worlds, known and unknown? What, on the other hand, are its obduracies, its boundaries and divisions, its omissions and exclusions, its dead ends, nightmare passages, or blind alleys? ... And how might its representation participate in constituting subjects of affect or action?’

(Gibson-Graham, 1996: 206)

Introduction

Making sense is an inherent social condition. When a grassroots organisation attempts to make sense of their own history, the process is akin to editing a film. It has been observed that in the same manner history creates narrative out of the fragments of what is left of an event after it has occurred, so too will film often construct a seamless linear whole from a series of fragmented moments and discrete shots (Skoller, 2005). Each illustrate clear-cut progressions where discontinuities and incongruities exist (Vogel, 1974). Film practitioners and theorists have long lamented film being predominantly used to construct an orderly and predictable world, in which certain aspects of reality are emphasised at the exclusion of others (ibid). This

concern of film theorists is shared with academics in the social sciences who consider research to be a performative epistemology. Gibson-Graham have encouraged researchers to acknowledge how representational modes of thinking constitute our experiences of the world: 'when we tell a story and represent a social practice or site, what kind of social world do we construct with the force of representation?' (1996: 206). Moreover, if we only construct seamlessly linear narratives of our social world, what do we discard and exclude in the process?

The task of making sense became an all-consuming endeavour for Coexist as they found themselves confronting the possibility of eviction from the building they had been based at for close to a decade. After it had been communicated that the property developers Connolly & Callaghan wanted to sell Hamilton House, the Coexist team began drafting a proposal to purchase the building. If the team were unsuccessful with their bid, it was likely that their rolling one-year lease would not be renewed. Eviction would be a significant change for Coexist but it would also bring uncertainty to the future of over 200 individuals and organisations renting space. The process was further complicated because Coexist intended to submit an offer lower than the asking price. Rumours circulated that the market value of the building had dramatically inflated in response to unsolicited bids from London-based developers. The Coexist proposal bid was therefore more than a financial offer, it was a comprehensive audit and assessment of the entire Coexist project; an attempt to justify why it would be beneficial for Coexist to remain in the building. The challenge required Coexist to argue the case for social value above monetary value. It was an insurmountable task that necessitated making sense of a myriad disparate events, individual experiences and discrete moments in time. A notable sense of haste accompanied the process of creating the proposal. The Coexist working-group that was formed to steer the proposal bid worked tirelessly and beyond their own expertise. They had to compile evaluations of the project's social impact for the previous ten years while designing their vision for the following ten years going forward. The task of making sense involved establishing a linear narrative of progression and development within Coexist activities from their inception to the current day. Inevitably this entailed representing Coexist's social impact as a straightforward cause and effect relationship with the surrounding communities. The urgency attached to this process restricted opportunities to critically reflect on the messy actualities of Coexist's existence; to embrace the less planned and more fortuitous aspects of their organisation. The intense pressure the team found themselves under also limited the potential to question whether there were other avenues of action that could be of more benefit.

Intuition suggested there was a need to create spaces of dissent where we could challenge the linear representation of Coexist and diversify how the team were engaging with Coexist's past (See Appendix IV). It felt pertinent to interrogate the past as a 'form of knowledge rather than a re-created spectacle'

(Skoller, 2005: xxxv). In other words, rather than situate the past as a fixed endorsement of the present, instead facilitate a dynamic relation with the past as a means of learning and critically interrogating current practice and future ambitions. To enable this kind of dynamic relation, we engaged with the notion of *irrational cuts*. The terms *rational* and *irrational cuts* refer to different editing techniques. Rational cuts are when images are cut together to construct a false continuity between shots, that contribute to the development of the film as a whole. Irrational cuts means rather than having 'one image *after* the other, there is one image *plus* another'; meaning individual shots do not serve an overarching whole (Deleuze, 2013: 220). I contend that one can extend this notion of irrational cuts beyond the film screen. It is, for instance, possible to consider that while creating the proposal bid Coexist were effectively implementing *rational cuts* - creating continuity by editing together disparate events to construct a seemingly linear whole. It therefore seemed appropriate that we should harness the potential of irrational cuts to generate spaces of dissent, in which the fragmented discontinuities and incongruences of time were deliberately made visible and embraced. Thereby enabling more vulnerable, less determined connections with the past.

We facilitated two separate workshop spaces within Hamilton House to this end, which were open to Coexist team members, associates of the project and any users of the building. In these workshop spaces we presented films as a means of reconfiguring the notion of sustainability as a more fragmented and adaptive matrix of experience. Attempting to embrace a notion or 'irrational cuts' is not the same as making random connections, after all 'art is not chaos but a composition of chaos (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994: 204). It is therefore less about presenting chaos and more about reordering chaos. Artistic practice has the capacity to *tame the virtual*; and reorder the more chaotic forces of the world into more malleable forms of engagement and expression (Grosz, 2008). The impetus of the workshops was to reorder the chaotic aspects of Coexist's existence and thus enable a more dynamic relation between the Coexist projects current situation and their past experiences. For the first workshop, we attempted to do this through film alone. The film *Fragment/Sustain* (2017) utilises irrational cuts as a means to provoke the viewer into making assemblages between what they viewed on the screen with their own experiential knowledge. The ambition was for the viewing experience to be a generative activity: the irrational cuts are meant to encourage the viewer to elicit meaning and critically engage with the past by contributing their own thoughts, ideas and memory. With the second workshop we extended irrational cuts beyond the screen by presenting the film *Conversations in Neon* as part of an immersive performance exhibition. The irrational cuts within this workshop involved cutting together different installations and live performance. To guide our artistic decision-making, we utilised a *track lines* framework created by co-facilitator of the workshops Daniel Balla. In the same way irrational cuts in film cut together images, track lines cut together a series of scenarios for participants to gain an alternate experience of their everyday reality. In an attempt to

substantiate how assemblages were made beyond the screen within these workshops, this chapter foregrounds the written reflections and spoken responses of the participants. The responses elucidate how the films stimulated and provoked new ideas, sensations and thoughts.

4.1 Irrational Cuts

The film *Fragment/Sustain* (2017) attempts to disrupt normative notions of sustainability. It does this by refuting the representation of Coexist as a stable 'model'. The film implements irrational cuts as a means to present Coexist as an 'amorphous collection of juxtaposed pieces' that can be 'joined together in an infinite amount of ways' (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987: 476). In this sense, the film visibly plays with dynamics of time. The way I approached editing was influenced by two prominent experimental filmmakers: British filmmaker Adam Curtis and Canadian filmmaker Isiah Medina. As I will make clear in this section, these two filmmakers each use irrational cuts within their practice but in distinctly different ways. Curtis applies irrational cuts to expose what is hidden by dominant historical and geopolitical narratives. Medina, on the other hand, implements irrational cuts to foreground how humans experience the present moment; with particular reference to the ubiquity of digital screens and recording devices in our current world.

I was drawn to the films of Adam Curtis as I approached editing *Coexistence in Time* (2017) because Curtis exclusively uses archive footage when creating his narrated documentaries about geopolitical content. For the film *Fragment/Sustain* (2017), we had decided that we should attempt to use the vast terabytes worth of footage I had gathered during my engagement with Coexist. While this was not strictly archive footage, there was still a sense of re-engaging with footage shot for various different purposes, in the attempt to discover something new. While we did film additional footage for the film, it felt appropriate that as Coexist 'looked back' upon its past, we concurrently should scan through Coexist's visual history. Studying the films of Adam Curtis and the breadth of the footage included gives the impression that Curtis has access to infinite hours of visual material recorded in a myriad different locations and times across the world. When going through vast quantities of footage, the salient challenge is constructing a method for deciding what to include. Otherwise one is almost paralysed through the sheer possibility of options. What is significant with Curtis is that he deliberately favours footage that has been discarded or unused. This can be taken from various sources, including news reports, home movies, tourist adverts, military body cameras and so on. Interrogating discarded footage is not new per se. There is a rich history of activist and revisionist films offering *corrective* accounts of history (Renov, 1993). Furthermore, Curtis consistently uses authoritative narration in his films, which further compounds his similarities with revisionist film. Nonetheless, what distinguishes Curtis' filmmaking is how his experimental approach to

editing explicitly challenges the very notion of representing historical events. The incongruencies Curtis constructs between images, counteracts the authority of his own omniscient narration.

It is telling that the most powerful moments in Curtis' films are often devoid of any narration. One such moment occurs in his 2015 film *Bitter Lake*, which interrogates the genealogy of the 2001 U.S. invasion of Afghanistan. In one segment of the film, Curtis presents what is clearly outtake footage from a British news crew. The viewer is presented with a news crew in a hospital in Afghanistan, frantically scrambling around a young Afghan girl who has lost an eye and been seriously maimed, one assumes, as 'collateral damage' from the military conflict. What is significant is that Curtis only includes the discarded footage from this scene, in which the camera is recording but the intended shot is not set yet. The viewer witnesses the news crew negotiate with the father to try and stage a moment of tenderness by making the girl hold a flower. Curtis allows the single shot to play out while the off camera voices of the news crew debate whether it is more ethical to stage the shot themselves or to ask the father to direct the young girl for them. Throughout the entirety of this unsettling scene, the young girl is entirely disconnected; existing in the moment, somewhat dazed and perplexed, as bodies furrow around her, attempting to represent her experience as best they can.



Figure 4.1: Screenshot from *Bitter Lake* (2015) by Adam Curtis. The footage shows a young Afghan girl in a hospital with her father while a news crew attempt to stage a shot.

The film abruptly cuts to body camera footage of a soldier in a field, eventually lingering on one soldier playing with a bird in nature. The viewer is suddenly in another moment of time completely. The cut made does not continue a sequence of action, progress the narrative or follow a thematic thread. The cut does not follow any rational progression or sustain a 'model of Truth' (Rodowick, 1997: 12). With no desire to create a rational progression, the different images appear in isolation for the viewer to contemplate, presenting time as lacunary, disparate and dispersive (ibid). In this respect, Curtis is not offering a corrective vision of history, replacing one account of events with another. Instead, Curtis is refuting the very possibility of accurately representing the past by foregrounding the mechanics of representation. The way in which Curtis illuminates the mechanics of representation is something I overtly wanted to apply to the film *Fragment/Sustain*. While there are certainly occasions when a more linear sense of time can be valuable for communicating a story or lesson, it is vital that these do not become the only version of the past. Otherwise we reduce the capacity to continually learn and develop through engagement with the past.



Figure 4.2: Screenshot from *Bitter Lake* (2015) by Adam Curtis. The scene shows footage of a Western soldier in a war zone stroking a small bird that has perched on the end of his gun.

While Adam Curtis radically reconfigures our perception of history, Isiah Medina uses irrational cuts to skewer and refract the present moment. Medina produces autobiographical documentaries, in which he combines real-life footage with staged scenes featuring his friends and family members. What is distinctive about Medina's approach to editing is that it presents life as an endless series of interconnected moments. The films are constructed through dense layers of superimposed images, evoking a world that is already cut up through the increasing ubiquity of mobile phones and screen culture. What is most affecting about Medina's approach to irrational cutting is the intense disorientation generated by his editing. Unlike Curtis, who often holds shots for significant amounts of time, Medina makes rapid speed cuts that present life as continuously emerging. He layers images in a manner similar to how samples are layered within the electronic and hip-hop soundtracks that permeates his films. He cuts both images and sound to construct an erratic rhythm that unsettles the viewer's ability to make sense by obscuring conventional film language.



Figure 4.3: Screenshot from *88:88* (2015) by Isiah Medina. The footage of children playing with a camera phone is superimposed over an image of a group of young adults hanging out on the street.

The purpose for Medina's highly stylised editing is to generate assemblages; assemblages between images and assemblages between images and the viewer. Medina has stated that films have the ability to produce alternate perceptions of the social world:

It's not that our ideas are wrong and reality is right, and our ideas do not fit, sometimes reality is wrong about itself, and doesn't fit its own idea of itself... we begin, and follow by rationally cutting our true lives together.

(Medina, 2016)

The language Medina uses is provocative. His claim to '*rationally* cut our *true* lives together' is an explicit willingness to disrupt more stable representations of our social world. Furthermore, Medina insinuates an ethical impetus to his approach. The irrational cuts disrupt systems of knowledge and codes of behaviour that categorise and separate human lives: 'the cut presents the present. We cut across represented identity to a shared present' (ibid). Creating a *shared present* is both a stylistic and thematic thread pervading much of the content in Medina's films; isolated lives experiencing different moments of time are superimposed to create an alternate version of reality. Medina's approach to irrational cuts reaffirms the assertion that the assemblages being made between images and viewers are as important as those between cuts (Powell 2012). It is the assemblages generated between the viewer and film that actively enable new ideas, thoughts and ways of thinking; film as invention not reflection (Skoller, 2005). In the same way Medina cuts different individuals, locations and times together so that they share the present moment, I wanted to make explicit links between the myriad of different individuals and organisations that have experienced the Hamilton House building in the past with the current users of the space. In our previous films we were able to show how film is able to generate affective relations of vulnerability through film-viewing experiences in the same manner as they are produced between different bodies through embodied facilitation and radical protests. Expanding the scope of what can produce these kinds of relations enabled us to engage with how affective relations are generated through our embodied encounters with material objects, such as doorways, and also our encounters with virtualities, such as those embedded in the gentrification phenomenon. There was now an opportunity to expose how affective relations of vulnerability can be generated through notions of time and memory.

4.2 Assemblages in Film: *Fragment/Sustain* (2017)

PLEASE WATCH *Fragment/Sustain* (2017) FILM

[All quotations in the following section are extracted from the audio transcript of our workshop: *Understanding Coexistence* held on 21/02/2017 with the Coexist team and members of the Hamilton House community]



Figure 4.4: Screenshot from *Fragment/Sustain* (2017).

The film *Fragment/Sustain* (2017) was made in an attempt to present a less deliberate, less stable perspective of the Coexist project. Moreover, it deliberately ruptured from a linear notion of time to evoke a more dynamic relation with the past. The impetus to do so came out of research and development sessions held with co-facilitator Daniel Balla. It became apparent that there was a need for the Coexist team and building users to engage with the dense entanglement of experiences attached to the project to enable more informed ideas regarding the future of the project. Daniel identified the need to focus on the somewhat elusive notion of *coexistence*. He was keen to understand how coexistence can be identified in people's everyday routines and personal relationships with other people in the building, surrounding communities and the Coexist project itself. I began envisioning the film we might make when Daniel discussed how different people experience coexistence:

Everybody has a perspective on those things, and its different for everybody. Obviously there will be some crossover... and that gives us that myriad... a prism... there's lots of lenses.... it's like the crystal ball of how we see coexistence.

The language Daniel uses, evoking the image of a *prism* and myriad *lenses* enabled a shared vision of what we wanted to create with the coproduced film. I wanted to implement irrational cutting as a means to present the intersection of different lenses all colliding together. Complimenting the evocative imagery of his language, Daniel discussed his own experience of the Coexist project at a lively pace, as a flowing stream of memories:

I think coexistence is central to everything we do here... That kind of real interweaving of cultures and different activity. The fact that you have this really disgusting old office... and you stick drumming in there. And then down the street you can hear it, as you walk up Stokes Croft is almost calling you. Just those rhythms I swear have changed Stokes Croft...

...From that to all the different anarchist groups we've had here, we had the alternative health festival which caused all sorts of ... 'stuff'. We had the social worker stuff, radical book-fair here, CoResist creating direct action, rising people up at Stapleton Rd, to breaking people into the BP AGM. We've had... Coexist itself, which has evolved all of this time from a group of very idealistic friends to a business that's got turnover of £600,000 a year and is desperately trying to preserve the fabric of this project which holds over 200 artist-tenants, over 300 businesses... and is a real heartbeat of this... community. And so coexistence is what's made all this possible.

As Daniel allowed his memories to pour fluidly from his mind, he made abrupt connections, jumping from one aspect of the project to another, with no clear linear trajectory. It became apparent that when we were discussing *coexistence*, we were not only discussing ideas around relationality regarding human and material relations, but the relationality of different experiences across *time*.

We coproduced the film *Fragment/Sustain* (2017) as a stimulus for critical interrogation at our workshop on discussing coexistence. I utilised Adam Curtis' approach to irrational cuts at different moments throughout the film. One particular aspect of his approach I applied was the way in which Curtis will allow single shots with little action play out for long periods. The rhythm of these shots and how they

sit isolated from the surrounding segments, allows the viewer to contemplate time as lacunary and disparate (Rodowick, 1997). I implemented this tactic at different stages of the film. One segment shows the laboured motions of a dance practitioner moving drums in a nondescript corridor. At the end of the film I use a similar tactic when showing a cleaner mopping the events space floor; the slow tempo of which contrasts with the high energy of other segments in the film. Presenting time as dispersive elicited responses during our workshop. Deborah from CoResist shared that she:

really liked the balance of what felt like action and reflection. I felt like the film really reflected what I experience here, which is the fast-paced movement, rhythm and action, and then the feet over water, or the little flashing of the lights, or just the simple moving of the drums, and I feel like that's something... I feel is appreciated here and I think is kind of essential in this building, from what I experience, that we constantly appreciate both the outward and the little things underneath, the quiet moments.

While Deborah discussed how a dispersive notion of time reflects her own experiences, //Kabbo from D-MAC posited that this was perhaps Coexist's function, to facilitate different rhythms of time:

So it presents a sense of stillness and then also just to see the movement of the different activities, people doing their own thing. So that was a nice contrast, because we need that, cos we are the stillness, we are the movement, you know we are the bridge that holds those two together.

This dialogue offers a sense of how participants were drawn to moments of the film that expressed a sense of what it is that Coexist and users of the space experience in Hamilton House.

Other segments of the film demonstrated how the assemblages made between film and viewer can generate new ideas, in this case ideas of how Coexist might develop and expand as a project. During one segment of the film I included a sequence of a talk delivered at Hamilton House discussing how ecological thinking could positively affect how society approaches law and policy making. I manipulated



Figure 4.5: Screenshot from *Fragment/Sustain* (2017). The sequence uses irrational cuts to present the shopping centre Cabot Circus as a hive structure.

the sequence by gradually adding irrational cuts, similar to the dense layering approach of Isiah Medina. I interspersed the sequence with footage I had captured while filming in the multi-million pound shopping centre Cabot Circus to experiment with what connections might emerge. Assemblages were generated between the images, in which the speaker's words connected with the images of the shopping centre to evoke a hive-like structure. The irrational cutting mimicked Medina's notion that film creates a shared present; cutting through what keeps us separate in everyday society. Some of Coexist team participating in the workshop were particularly drawn to this image, using the sequence to generate ideas of how Coexist might approach coexistence. Coexist director, Chloe Foy, expressed an urge to reach out to more people, so that they can experience the coexistence happening at Hamilton House:

I think that the bit that struck me in the film, was actually that bit in Cabot Circus, shooting all the people, especially younger people walking around in white trainers, buying more trainers (group laughter) and that's fine, they can do that, but I just want to bring them in, and debunk this whole we're just hippies here and actually bring them in, and actually get

them to experience this magical thing, that I can't explain. And I don't know how to bring them in because I want them to come here, not just those people but lots of different people.

The energy in Chloe's voice expressed how she felt some people were not aware that there are alternate ways of existing. Discussions amongst the team developed to recognise how coexistence pervades all aspects of life, with director Kimberley stating:

The thing that struck me watching it, and then reflecting and thinking about coexistence, is that: coexistence isn't like this construct... isn't like a group of people coming together and going, 'shall we, shall we coexist?' [*Group laughter*]. It's like, we already are, by default, even everyone out there, everyone at Cabot Circus, we're all kind of going about our business coexisting with one another. It's something about bringing in that consciousness it's like doing, yeah, conscious coexistence. And that being the change that kind of twists it into something meaningful.

Through these discussions a sense of clarity began to form, with the team articulating the importance of being able to recognise how coexistence is affected and facilitated by Coexist as an organisation compared with how coexistence is already there anyway. Front desk manager, Ruth Keenan, shared her own ideas, directly referring to her own daily experiences:

It was something around coexistence and how Coexist talks about coexistence. Do we... as far as I'm aware we don't currently kind of... you know... say to people 'you're coming to use our spaces and you need to abide by these coexisting rules' and I think that... I don't know if we'd want to do that, don't really want to define it in that way necessarily. But from our point of view downstairs, and I know from other customer facing... argh it's hard work, and you know, with a lot of the building users, it's like 'that is not coexisting right there!' (group laughter) do you know what I mean? If you wanna come down to it, it's like, arghh dealing with people who... yeah, are rude and, yeah, aren't paying their bills... and are being really difficult with other people in the building or expecting to be served in some way. And it's like 'hang on no... this is give and take' and we tend to, I know from my perspective anyway, is I really try not to take any of that crap, and I'll communicate that. Maybe there's needs to be another way, I don't know, how do we influence that kind of positive change, do you know what I mean, because it feels like it should be... possible?

One could note a palpable conviviality in embracing the more haphazard, less stable aspects of the Coexist. The content of these discussions considerably diverged from discussing Coexist in proposal bids, where it was important to reaffirm a fixed, stable image of Coexist as a project.

What assemblages the film might generate were dependent on each individual viewer. The subsequent discussion after the film viewing was a way of enabling further assemblages between participants. A less convivial and more frustrated discussion broke out in response to the opening sequence

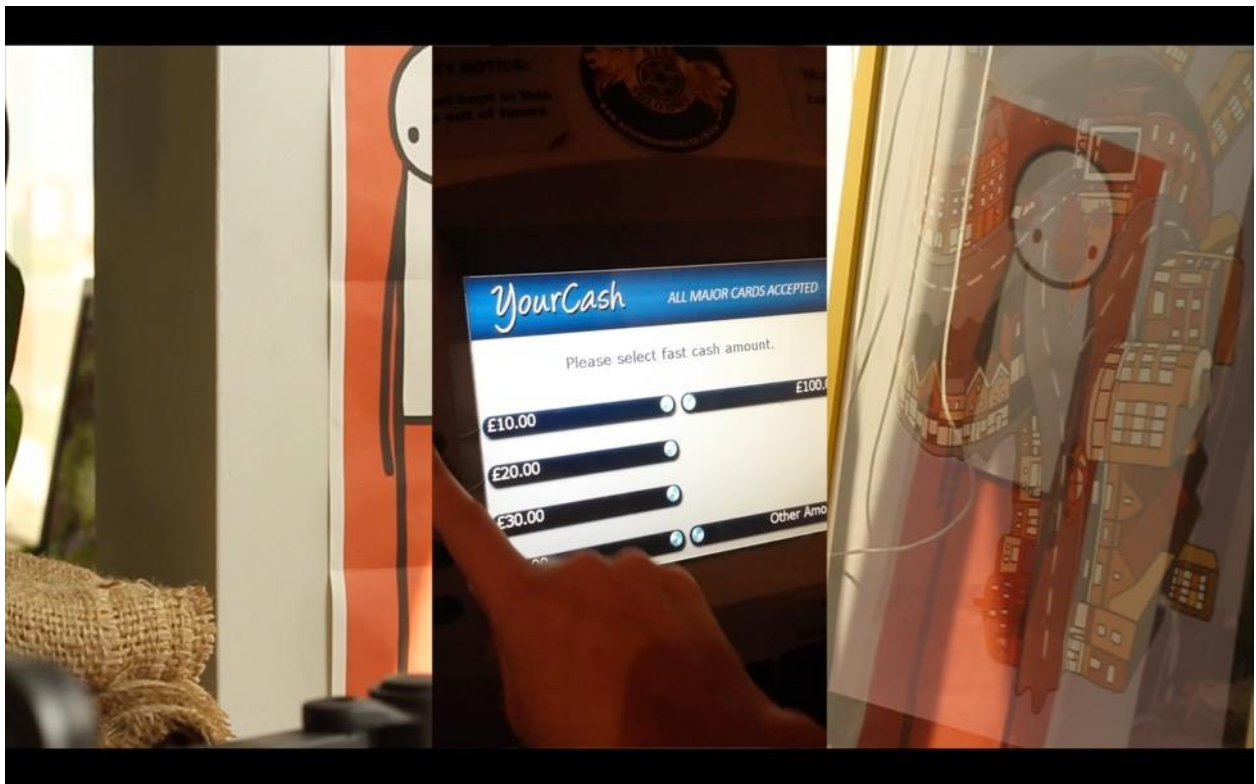


Figure 4.6: Screenshot from *Fragment/Sustain* (2017). The sequence includes clips taken from a digital story created by members of the Coexist team.

of the film. In this sequence I cut together clips from a digital story made by members of the Coexist team interrogating the potentially exclusionary role of money within the Coexist project. The film was produced during a workshop I had facilitated with the team earlier in our research project. I used a clip of a cash machine dispensing money with some other footage I had filmed at Coexist's Pioneering Period Policy event, in which a member of Imayla criticises capitalist culture: “We are all the solution. And that’s why this is a revolution. It’s capitalism that rips your right to be a living being in your own world.” The sequence was an opportunity to throw together the contradictions that inevitably arise in grassroots practice,

particularly with groups who regularly discredit capitalist culture yet also must align with capitalist economic models to sustain. A member of the Coexist finance team, Bea Oliver commented:

It's really interesting hearing everybody else's contributions, realising that I was watching it with a critical mindset. I'm not in a particularly bad mood or anything (group laughter) but I was critiquing Hamilton House and what we do, not necessarily the film itself. More who we are, how we operate and how we present ourselves. And the one thing that will stick with me the most is this overwhelming sense of irritation when I saw someone in the video who – I administrate the finances – and I saw someone who hasn't paid their bills. For a long, long time and is about to go to court over it. So that's made me question like who counts as our community? And where is the line between coexisting and not coexisting? And when this takes into account money – and money can be such a barrier to coexisting and brings out people's... self interest on both sides. And so, that interacting with the discussion in the film about capitalism... and Deazy's kind of diatribe against capitalism... my thought at that point was like 'we are all capitalists, and is nice to pretend like we're not, and I like to pretend that I'm not but obviously I am, and so is Coexist.

A member of the D-MAC dance collective, Rubba, interjected suggesting Coexist were a 'nice' form of capitalism. Bea continued:

Well, yeah and then you get into a discussion about 'good capitalism' and 'bad capitalism' and that was a kind of, yeah, like a weird waterfall of thought around coexistence, and money and capitalism... I just thought it was interesting, not even a judgement on that person, more a judgement on myself that that made me think, oh this person doesn't deserve to be included in, like, the vision of Coexist as a.... (inaudible)... and that made me angry and so I had to question myself about...but it's just money.

The participant's comments exposed the inadequacy of certain discourses and narratives to making sense of the continuously unfolding intra-actions experienced by grassroots organisations and its members. The exchange revealed how when we make sense, we often only create the illusion of continuity, that does not enable interrogation of our less easily explained felt sensations.

The workshop space enabled participants to deconstruct habitual ways of knowing. There was a tendency to avoid fixed representations of how we should understand Coexist as a project or how successful the project has been. Instead, there was a willingness to embrace the multiple interpretations and ways of understanding the project. In response to the frustration felt towards narratives of 'good' and 'bad' capitalisms, a Coexist director and member of the Community Kitchen, Ari Cantwell, offered the idea that beyond ideas of capitalism there will always be some form of agreement or contract that bonds ideas of coexistence:

I think that when you are coexisting you enter into some kind of contract with one another. That contract might be a literal financial contract where you say 'I will pay my rent' and someone says 'you will pay rent to us' and we make that agreement. Some of the other contracts might be: I'm gonna turn up Monday morning and Tuesday morning with Bristol Drugs Project – I'm not gonna pay, I'm gonna access the course for free but I'm gonna come in and I'm gonna treat them all with respect and you're gonna treat me with respect, and that's the contract.

...And also we're sitting in a world that is a system that we perpetuate, and we can incrementally change it... I'd rather exist within it than move to the highlands of Scotland and try and set up an anarchist community. Because I feel that change happens incrementally and... yeah it still kind of hurts to be like 'yeah, we are sitting in a capitalist system'.

The suggestion by Ari was that a capitalist system is another kind of system that must be coexisted with. This very much aligns with the critical perspective of what ethically drives most alternate economic projects. As critical theorist Rosi Braidotti eloquently suggests when discussing how ethical approaches can guide social change:

The ethical-political concept here is the necessity to think with the times and in spite of the times, not in a belligerent mode of oppositional consciousness, but as a humble and empowering gesture of co-construction of social horizons of hope.
(2010: 57)

This reaffirms the value of projects that are willing to go beyond 'anti-capitalist' and instead perform as more 'post-capitalist or 'despite-capitalisms' organisations.

The intention of the film and workshop space was not to reach definitive resolutions but generate ideas and new ways of thinking. In the film there were regular examples of team members attempting to articulate and represent their practice. I included discarded footage from a promotional video of a Coexist team member as they attempt to articulate the value of their wellbeing practice. The subject is attempting to give a succinct soundbite that can be used for an online fundraiser film. By lingering on this moment where the subject fumbles on her words, I wanted to foreground the tension between *the doing* and *the representing* of practice. The shot of the team member is layered with images from another promotional film made for the wellbeing department. The promotional footage overlaid includes smooth transitions between different shots. The overlaid footage is being used to construct an irrational cut with the single shot of the wellbeing practitioner. The irrational cut thus illuminates the mechanics of representation. In the



Figure 4.7: Screenshot from *Fragment/Sustain* (2017). The image shows a wellbeing practitioner as they try to articulate their work

feedback forms similar ideas emerged as team members reflected on how the space of critical reflection aligned with their daily role. A member of the Coexist marketing team described how part of

his role is involves communicating what it is that Coexist as an organisation does and that 'I don't think my thoughts on this are any clearer after taking part in the workshop, but it did give me an insight into other people's perspectives.' There is a value in enabling space that allows the sharing of perspectives without the need to reduce ideas into pithy declarations or statements of fact.

There was evidence that some of the team were taking from the workshop an idea of *conscious coexistence*, as something more distinct from the instinctive ways we all naturally coexist with one another. One team member wrote in their feedback form, 'for me it's served as a very pertinent reminder – work less, connect more. Never say no to slowing, stopping and reconnecting. How can I fully coexist (consciously) if I never stop? This notion of thinking of all the textures of coexistence was reaffirmed by another person in their feedback, positing that: 'coexisting doesn't always have to be harmonious. Valuing these spaces in order to reflect on ideas of coexistence. People need to be nourished; creatively, physically & emotionally to be able to coexist well in harmony and difficulty'. A member of the events team reflected how she began to consider her own impact within Hamilton House beyond her specific role, stating how she: 'Began to think more positively about my role – instead of a human booking device – I began to see how I could play a part in the *transformation* too.' While these members of the team found tangible connections and new possible trajectories, a couple of team members expressed a frustration at the lack of explicit disharmony displayed in the film. A member of the Coexist team commented how they found the

film, workshop, and to extent, the whole Hamilton House building as existing in a 'bubble'. Similarly, one team member felt there was not enough space to engage with issues of inequality and privilege. This last feedback left me feeling frustrated because I agreed that more conflict should be included in the film but I had found it difficult to gather the kind of visual material that would enable a more vivid presentation of less harmonious aspects of coexistence. These last two pieces of feedback inspired the decision to extend the notion of irrational cuts beyond the film screen and create an immersive installation space. In doing so, irrational cuts could be more explicitly made between different ideas, thoughts and sensations.

4.3 Cutting Beyond the Screen

For the second workshop we wanted to screen the film *Conversations in Neon* (2016) to create a space for participants to confront the role of grassroots organisations within processes of gentrification. While conceptualising the second workshop we decided it was important to facilitate more explicit assemblages between viewers and images. This initially began by re-editing the film *Conversations in Neon* (2016) so

that it could be presented on two screens as part of an installation. I was partly inspired by one participant's comment that they felt the film presented a bubble. A central element of my approach to film is to use images that provoke the viewer to draw upon their own memories and thoughts. I was concerned that if someone felt a film was somewhat contained, then perhaps I was not doing enough to elicit a response. By transforming the film into an installation I wanted to collapse any sustained critical distance existing between the viewer and film, allowing the viewer to be immersed in the film on a more visceral level. Once we opened up presenting the film beyond a single contained screen, we began discussing what else we could cut together in the space.

We implemented a *track lines* approach created by Daniel Balla to guide this process. Track lines are a way of taking participants on an immersive journey in order for them to experience new perspectives and practice new ways of being; participating; and taking action. So from the very first moment that a participant enters a track line, there is an intervention that arrests their attention. The participants are invited or compelled, depending on the tone and intention of the space, to take action in some way. This may involve reading or watching something, or possibly reacting to someone in some way or following somebody, or engaging in a game or activity. The intention of that *scenario* is that it will inform the participant something about their role, their way of behaving, their ways of referring to themselves, or their way of interacting with others, or the theme or tone of the immersive experience itself. This will be the first scenario along the track line. And the audience or participants moves through the track line into different scenarios, a series of different scenarios, each adding a layer upon layer to their understanding. Each scenario enables a participant to experience new ideas or new information. This series of scenarios and the way that they are linked together is what constitutes the track line itself. The intention is that through participating through this immersive experience, the participants are able to have a very different type of experience that is constructed in alternate way to how they usually experience something.

Scenario # 1 - Film: *Conversations in Neon*



Figure 4.8: Dark Room – The film *Conversations in Neon* (2016) was projected across two walls

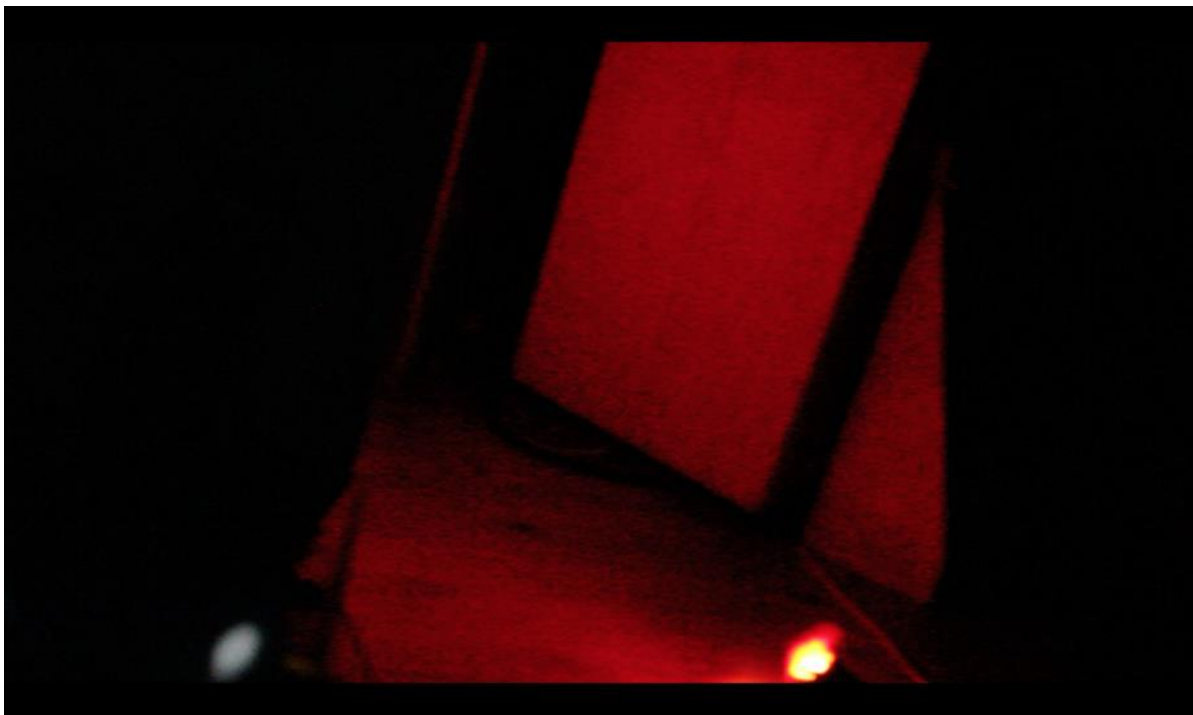


Figure 4.9: Dark Room – The space was demarcated by stage curtains, blocks and translucent screens lit by red floor lights.

The immersive workshop began with the film shown on two screens in a dark space. The film presents the visceral and felt experiences that affect and are affected by processes of gentrification; the anxiety and anger of those vulnerable groups being pushed out; the guilt of those who feel they enabled such processes; the hope of those attempting to maintain a grassroots presence; and the frustration of those who have seen it all before. The use of *polyphonic voices* presented within the film were played in stereo through large speakers surrounding the participants.

Scenario # 2



Figure 4.10: Live Performance recreated the conditions of the homeless community, who remain a prevalent stakeholder within the Stokes Croft area.

The first live performance within this space was discrete and intimate. It was also a more transient space than others. As participants moved from the dark room they passed through a narrow corridor, built with stage walls. Participants could peer through the cracks of a screened off space, within which contained a

mattress, clearly distressed by the weather, and on top a lay man curled in a sleeping bag, sleeping rough. A moment of comfort, awash with vulnerability.

The structure of the immersive workshop can be understood as a constant negotiation between distance and closeness; between discourse and embodied sensation; between what is written and spoken and what is felt. Never prioritizing one or the other, but instead presenting how they are all continually entwined and mutually constitutive. It is for this reason that it is important to include an element of liveness. It was an opportunity to foreground that while we cannot always hold these conversations with all stakeholders being present and accounted for, we are able to at least take precautions to prevent conversations ever becoming too removed or isolated.

Scenario # 3

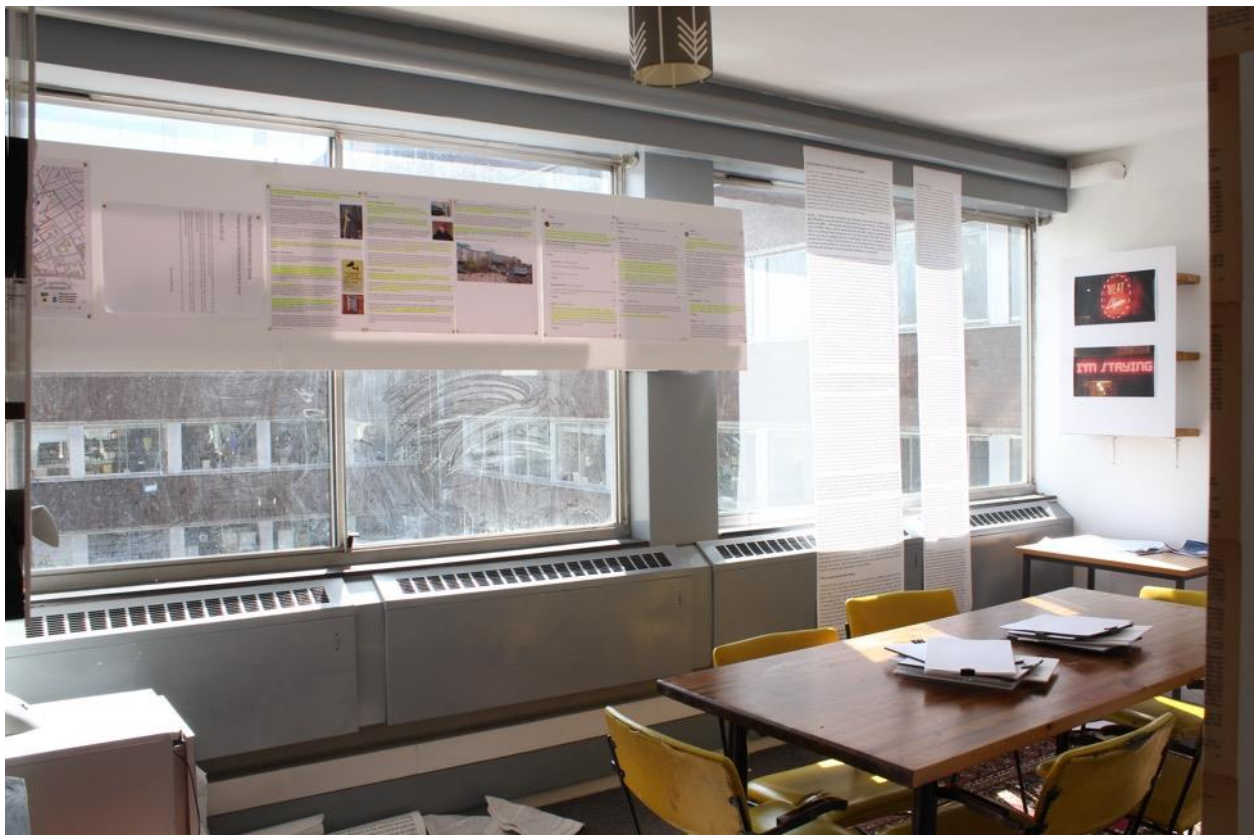


Figure 4.11: Reading Room – The space empty

Participants then moved into the reading room, a very small room in the building, which we had covered all the available space with everything we could find written about gentrification in Stokes Croft and Coexist's role. This included newspapers, academic papers, online forums, photos of graffiti. While some text was pinned the walls, other text lay scattered and crumpled on the floor, creating a sense that the space had been abandoned and left behind. Concealed within a metal filing cabinet was a speaker playing a loop of interviews I had conducted regarding gentrification as part of my research.



Figure 4.12: Reading Room – A still taken of participants reading and taking notes

The intention of the space was to evoke the sense of claustrophobia, panic and subsequent paralysis that can be evoked by engaging with everything that is written about your everyday practice and world. It was to reveal how even text-based modes of communication have a material presence and can affect intensities beyond their representational meaning. The room was small with a large table in the middle, making it difficult for participants to move around one another, with little personal space while reading the texts. To add to a sense of discomfort, the room was much brighter than the previous installations.

Scenario # 4



Figure 4.13: Live Performance – A still taken of participant taking notes as a live conversation occurs between two people only visible as silhouettes

The second live performance that followed, and the final stage of the immersive installation, was a deliberate attempt to move the experience to something more direct, specific and intimate. Two people were invited to participate in the final installation. The two participants were both familiar with the Hamilton House space, using it regularly, yet also experiencing first-hand some of the exclusionary elements at play. One participant was a community worker in the neighbouring St Paul's area of Bristol, which has experienced rapid gentrification in recent years. The other participant was someone who regularly associates with the *ping-pong community* at the front of the building, an often low-income group of people who cannot always afford to use the other services the building provides yet converge in this space. Indeed, the presence of this ping-pong community has been regularly raised by building-users who feel they have greater rights to this space as paying customers.



Figure 4.14: Live Performance – A still taken of participant taking notes as a live conversation occurs between two people only visible as silhouettes

There was a wide range of contributions, discussion of positive social cohesion produced in areas of the building alongside explicit aspects of privilege and exclusion noted elsewhere. This final installation enabled participants a more direct connection with the many voices of those affected by and entangled within processes of gentrification. It enabled attentive listening, that was a contrast to the stark coldness of text adorning the walls of the Reading Room.

4.3.1 Reclaiming Agency

[All quotations extracted from audio transcript of workshop: *Coexist - Urban Regenerators or Gentrifiers?* Held on 09/05/2017 with the Coexist team and members of the Hamilton House community]

The immersive installation enabled a way of making irrational cuts beyond the screen in the way film could be cut together with text and live performance. The first three scenarios were described by one participant in their feedback form as an ‘onslaught’, with reference to particularly the different voices contained in the film and the sheer volume of words written in the reading room. The last scenario, with the live conversation held between two people behind screens, was a rest from this so-called onslaught as it allowed participants

to listen closely to the sharing of testimonials. The gentrification phenomenon can certainly be overwhelming and the Coexist team have regularly struggled with how to confront their own role within this process. There has often been a tendency to feel guilt or anxiety at having *caused* gentrification in the area. Yet discussions in this workshop were of a distinctly different tone. There was a far more distinguished sense of agency being expressed by participants, particularly in relation to the potential threat of eviction from the Hamilton House building. The thoughts shared afterwards would suggest that the cutting together of different aspects of the gentrification phenomenon enabled tangible access points for the participants; in turn this enabled the participants to actively reject many of the views that have often caused anxiety in the past. Front desk manager, Ruth Keenan, expressed as much, saying:

You know seeing the things written there in the reading room, there's so many big wide statements about who uses this building in terms of... oh everyone's a trustafarian, oh everyone... you know.. it's all... it's kind of like 'where did you get that from?'... but it the same way we sometimes blanket say 'we don't have any of these people' and I think that that would happen wherever we went and whatever we did.

This sentiment was echoed by director Ari Cantwell who pointed out that there was a tendency for Coexist team members and associates to wrongly perpetuate some of these totalising claims with the language the team uses.

The frustration and attention given to the performativity of language and misconceptions regarding Coexist was then extended to the inadequacy of dominant gentrification narrative. A member of the finance team, Bea Oliver, who has participated in various grassroots organisations, local currency projects, and co-operatives media groups, expressed the lack of agency afforded by a linear gentrification narrative:

I found myself feeling impatient that I couldn't find an answer to a question. What was making me feel impatient.... it makes it sound as if there's some magical combination of born and bred Bristolians and people from St Pauls and homeless people and people with alcohol problems that need to be present in order for it to count as not gentrification. Like, is that true? Could that be true? Do we need to be preserving this specific mix of people? Is that an ethical thing to do to kind of essentially curate a community? I want there to be a definitive answer: what counts as *not* gentrification, what does that look like?

A similar rhetoric was shared by the manager of the Coexist shop, Gem Bergoyne, who also rents studio space in the building. She evoked the notion of a schizoid subjectivity, in that she found herself occupying two seemingly contradictory positions, both as a victim and assailant of gentrification:

Everyone's got a need, everyone's got a different need. I've lived round here for like 15 years now and the need was cheap accommodation, places to do your artwork for free... because I just can't help but not do it... and that's kind of what comes out a bit. And then low and behold, all these years later, I work here, and my children have been born here, and they're teenagers now and this is where they live. But our landlord could turn round and give us a month's notice and we won't be able to live round here, at all. Because we have really cheap rent at the moment. And I work for the organisation that gets blamed for this. And I don't even get paid enough to support myself... It's like 'who is doing the gentrifying then?'

The rejection of inadequate narratives was further compounded by Gem's concluding statement:

I'm so bored of *gentrification*... this word. This is a political fight. This is not a fight about gentrification. This is about politics and about socialist ideals and communities. Like fucking *gentrification* - if I ever hear that word one more time.

Through the sharing of perspectives, thoughts, feelings and ideas, one could note a palpable sense of defiance emerging amongst feelings of frustration.

Once participants had had the opportunity to address what they had disagreed with during the installation, there was a shift in tone in the group discussion. There was a willingness to focus on the more acute aspects of the gentrification phenomenon that Coexist could be more attentive to. A facilitator with Bristol CoLab, who participated in the second live performance, commented how 'perception is as important as reality'. In saying this, Jose was stating the importance of being more aware to the less visible aspects of privilege and exclusion that permeate processes of gentrification. Jose described the displacement he has witnessed within his community work in the St Pauls' area of Bristol:

Basically everyone else is like active in the area has the same problem. They're just busy doing. And we're so busy doing, that we're not interacting and then there is like jealousy. And there is serious jealousy. And the jealousy relates to colour, some of it does relate to

skin colour. And some of it relates to class. And then it just kind of ends up... we're getting more and more divided. I think it would be really important when you move forward to really look at 'who will be jealous? who will you make jealous?' And how do you stop that from the beginning.

The sentiment expressed by Jose was echoed in a comment by Coexist director Ari, who foregrounded how the organisation needs to negotiate a balance between rejecting inadequate totalising statements made by people at a distance while also more consciously confronting and acknowledging some of the failings of Coexist:

The reflection of this.. or the response from this... is it's uncomfortable. It's uncomfortable because you're a part of the process... I speak for myself but on reflection of Coexist... part of the process. You're also not the same as like multinational corporate development. It is not the same. Working in arts organisations and acting and responding, creating in an area, is not the same as a multi-profit organisation, coming in and making profit only, I do think it's different. But we pave those stones for that thing to happen. And in fact what happens is this organisation is blamed... which I think it's absolutely fine to have that blame... but then we forget to blame properly the multinational corporations that are finally, clinically, creating the area. That's what happens. Refugees get blamed but the problem is conflict and massive... you know the person or scapegoat gets blamed for these huge systemic problems and we don't reflect about it in our practice.

It would be a helpful trajectory for the organisation moving forward to more explicitly engage with how they manage narratives as an organisation and also how they can engage with the less tangible, affective register of both positive and negative social impact.

The workshop was an opportunity for the participants to navigate between the dominant discourses and the felt sensations attached to processes of gentrification; to confront and discuss what is enabling and what is limiting. The group began the workshop by sifting through and managing the dense layer of statements and claims made about the gentrification phenomenon. After this they attended to the more micropower relations embedded within regeneration projects and how Coexist can do more going forward. At the end of the workshop, there was more specific discussion surrounding the Hamilton House building that developed towards the end of the workshop. A participating member of Artspace/Lifespace, Doug Francisco, who I had interviewed while making *Conversations in Neon*, expressed his own dissatisfaction

of not gaining permanent possessions of sites that he had helped develop during squatting and regeneration projects. Yet he also stated that there had to be ways of using this knowledge:

Well you know the outcomes now don't you... as we all do... so I suppose it's putting a value on that in the first place. So if we'd known what they were going to do to Bristol we would have charged them for it.

The importance of ownership of buildings - a contentious subject in Coexist's initial formation - was reaffirmed in the closing statements. The Coexist shop manager Gem stated that 'ownership from the beginning' should be prioritised in future projects. The political significance of gaining current ownership of the Hamilton House building was finally expressed by Coexist director Ari, who was concerned the building could be sold to external property developers and converted into luxury flats:

If we cannot hold on to this place and instead we walk away or instead we don't put up a fight... we are saying that the only option for this world is one uni-linear path of corporate development. Because that is what the option is... the option is someone will by this.... for 7 million.... they'll turn it over and make so much profit that we can't even imagine.... it's a fucking waste of our money to buy this building... It's a waste of our money to buy this building because the building is not worth it... the only reason that it's worth it is because of the location.... but it is *worth* the political stance of saying 'it's not an option for this narrative to continue' and I'm sorry I feel really emotional. It's not an option for like... only massive entities with loads of money-making profit. It's not an option.

The way in which all the participants spoke about the issues at hand were open and honest. Over the course of the workshop one could acknowledge the team navigating a dense terrain of ideas, sensations, memories before progressing to ideas of hope for an alternate future. The sense was that there is a need to embody all these past actions and memories, and hope for an alternate future, through resilience in the present moment. While there were direct calls for action regarding the building, it felt as though the workshop was more concerned with addressing the often excluded, less tangible aspects of gentrification rather than planning a strategy or explaining Coexist's vision.

4.4 Conclusion

The two workshops surveyed in this chapter were the final two interventions made within Coexist's regulatory processes as part of our coproduced research project. Over the development of the project, the

term *spaces of dissent* has been utilised to refer to films, social sculpture, external events and internal workshops. We have used the term to designate spaces of engagement in which dominant discourses, normative codes of behaviour and conventional systems of knowledge are disrupted. Spaces of Dissent is therefore a malleable concept that can refer to different forms of engagement, yet the consistency between all these spaces is that they facilitate new ways of thinking and new ways of relating to one another. Similarly, one could identify different roles being performed by the spaces of dissent we constructed both through and within these final workshops. The arts practice we implemented was integral to enabling new perspectives of political issues and social tensions; it provided access points for engagement. The value of arts practice in regulation is that 'art struggles with chaos but it does so in order to render it sensory' (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994: 205). It is able to do this because art is itself a regulation - in the way art organises materials, form, movement, words and so on according to an internal system (Grosz, 2008). It does this to produce intensities and sensations that are not instantly recognisable. In doing so, one creates access points to cultural phenomena and social tensions that can otherwise be overwhelming; while foregrounding less easily perceived aspects that are at risk of being excluded. The value of using arts practice in this way manifested in our final workshops. During the first workshop, participants analysed their own responses to film as a means to interrogate the notion of coexistence. The group began by distinguishing between different kinds of coexistence - instinctive forms compared with more conscious forms - before considering how this might materialise as a procedure or a set of guidelines for Coexist's everyday practice. Similarly, our workshop interrogating processes of gentrification enabled participants to reject the more debilitating aspects of the cultural phenomenon - the anxiety, guilt, frustration - and instead focus on the more astute affirmative changes that might be made to practice; in this instance, regulating against processes of gentrification at the very beginning of a project rather than only waiting until it becomes an urgent, pressing issue.

The workshop format can itself function as a space of dissent, distinct from everyday arts practice. To what degree critical reflection, in and of itself, is integral to the development of grassroots organisations was interrogated during the initial stages of this coproduced project. Founding director, Jamie Pike, was keen to interrogate *why* we should hold spaces of dissent? *How* do we encourage dissent? What would *we* find satisfying in our outcomes? From this line of questioning, the Coexist team considered and debated how we should assess the value of holding workshop spaces. Daniel Balla, who coproduced the final workshops, was keen to highlight how, 'the space in this world for not having outcomes is very, very small and shrinking' and suggested that perhaps this was what the project would be about. Daniel was foregrounding the importance of experimentation over definite resolutions. Responding to these statements, Ari Cantwell suggested that we should demarcate between tangible outputs and less tangible outcomes; that

while we might not prioritise tangible outputs through the project, there would certainly be many outcomes generated. Ari was reaffirming the stance that spaces of critical reflection affect practice in numerous ways but these outcomes are not always overtly visible or easily measured. She continued to explain that because outcomes of critical reflection are often less tangible, charities and social enterprises will always cut the creative and reflexive aspects of their practice first when under economic strain. What is ultimately at stake is that if adequate time is not given to critically engage with the big issues of society as a means of challenging our preconceptions, charities and social enterprises will only ever be able to perform *firefighting* or crisis managements. There will be a lack of adequate critical interrogation of the social issues these organisations were set up to challenge and combat.



Figure 4.15: Photograph taken at *Understanding Coexistence* workshop. To conclude the session participants collaborated on a group painting. Music played as participants were encouraged to remain silent and reflect on how coexistence appears in their everyday practice

CONCLUSION

The coproduced project between the University of Bristol and Coexist presented in this thesis is a practice of imagining. We explored the theme of *Spaces of Dissent* as a way of (re)imagining how we might understand and approach processes of engagement. This thesis surveyed how we harnessed embodied arts practice as a means to interrogate everyday social tensions and political issues. Utilising arts practice - predominantly film - enabled us to experiment with how Coexist as a project might exist in different spaces, while also making it possible to account for the less tangible and less easily perceived textures of the everyday. We wanted to disrupt dominant discourses and create spaces where individuals could contribute their own felt experiences and realities. We therefore reconfigured the body from the periphery so that it was at the centre of our analysis and practice. This was inspired by the Coexist team's own use of embodied facilitation, which affirms that the body contributes to knowledge production and that we need to find new ways to think about and act with the body. Thinking and acting through film was a new trajectory for Coexist as a project, generating new ways of engaging with other bodies and their material surroundings.

Our intention was that these more expressive and expansive forms of engagement – these spaces of dissent – could inform how Coexist facilitate and regulate the Hamilton House building or any other spaces they might inhabit in the future. How our bodies move in and through space – interacting with the material surroundings and also with one another - affects how we perceive and experience space. Therefore, the spaces of dissent surveyed in this thesis were coproduced to enable transient, spatial disruptions in which it might be possible for new ways of thinking and acting to emerge. We were deliberately counter-acting the limitations that come from performing to an economically viable business model. There is an inherent risk that the quest for economic sustainability will often lead alternative and non-capitalist organisations down the familiar path from charisma to regularised routine, from inventiveness and passion

to bureaucracy, hierarchy, and instrumental reason (Walker, 1994).

The Stokes Croft area, in which Coexist is based at Hamilton House, demonstrates the importance of being able to imagine new approaches to social change. In one sense, Stokes Croft is simply a small stretch of road that separates the affluent Kingsdown residential area from the St Pauls neighbourhood, where Bristol's African-Caribbean culture first became established. Yet over the years the space has been reconfigured through the emergence of alternate economic practices, such as co-operatives, social enterprises, free shops, freegan restaurants and squatting movements, and also arts practice, such as anarchic theatre troupes, queer performance art and outdoor galleries. Imagining what other worlds are possible has transformed the urban space. Similarly, it is helpful to consider Coexist as a project of imagining. When Coexist formed in 2008 to manage the formerly-derelict office block Hamilton House they began imagining how it might be possible to adapt ideas practiced amongst squatting movements that had existed before in Stokes Croft and place them within an official setting, renting the space from Connolly and Callaghan. While this obviously means Coexist's own ideas diverge from those who see renting space as problematic, it enabled Coexist to facilitate the emergence of different kinds of spaces within the building. Coexist have instigated some of these developments, building a community kitchen, affordable wellbeing rooms, artists' studios and office space for charities and social enterprises. They have also offered space for others to contribute their own ideas, such as a bike project providing transport for asylum seekers and a dance, music and arts collective engaging in a rich array of different cultural practices. The manner in which this space developed has never been a linear progression but instead a dense network of disparate encounters and assemblages.

Practice-Research in Geography

The Productive Margins enabled the conditions to experiment with and further establish practice-research within geography. Within its own manifesto Productive Margins has emphasised how art can be engaged not only as a knowledge-*communicating* but also as a knowledge-*generating* practice. Within this doctoral research project, I have carried this assertion as a means to build upon the work of feminist and post-structuralist geographers Gibson-Graham. As stated already in this conclusion, this coproduced research project is, if anything, a project of imagining. Gibson-Graham themselves emphasise the ethical importance of imagining in various forms – more recently by promoting the importance of *weak theory*, a stance that explicitly criticises aspects of academic theory as being unhelpful to social progression and change (2014). The geographers Gibson-Graham encourage process of imagining because they argue that to *change the*

world, we must first change our understanding of the world. The advantage of practice-research is its ability to think theory through practice; thereby merging often heavy theoretical lenses with practical applications.

The thesis draws upon the concept of the encounter (O’Sullivan, 2006). The ability of art to produce encounters has been applied in geography successfully elsewhere, most notably in the work of Harriet Hawkins (2013). In this thesis I incorporate the concept of the encounter as a deliberate attempt to embrace the challenge Gibson-Graham set out in their 2008 *Ethics for an Anthropocene*. The text demonstrates a theoretical shift within their oeuvre. When Gibson-Graham first emerged in the mid 1990s, they were greeted with a fairly hostile atmosphere among academics, as outlined in their updated preface of *A Postcapitalist Politics* (2006). This hostile response during the mid 1990s has since been ascribed to the melancholy of the left felt amongst Marxist academics. Yet by 2010 the diverse economies approach was an established and respected lens for geographers concerned with assisting and collaborating with grassroots projects on the ground. At this stage there was an acknowledged polarisation in the diverse economies literature (Fickery & Hanrahan, 2014) between those that remain unconvinced by the emancipatory or progressive value of a diverse economic approach (Smith & Stenning, 2006) and others that feel they are documenting ‘oppositional strategies and practices that counter the patriarchal, capitalist and in some cases racist forms of marginalisation that are evident in a globalising economy’ (Oberhauser, 2005: 395). Aware of their own progression and journey, Gibson-Graham asserted the ability for engaged research to embrace affect theory and post-humanist discourses. I would contend that this theoretical shift was indicative of the geographers’ natural instinct to push at the limits of imagining; expanding the empirical in order to reconfigure the scope of research. Practice-research is progressive step that can assist this theoretical impetus to engage with theories of affect and post-humanist discourses. Similarly to how Gibson-Graham would attend to language in their earlier research – encouraging community partners to avoid inadequate narratives – arts practice further reconfigures how we understand the world.

Approaching coproduced research through arts practice has enabled a clear framework for engaging with affect theory and post-humanist discourses in the manner advocated by Gibson-Graham. The arts practice we implemented was integral to generating new perspectives of political issues and social tensions; it provided access points for engagement. The inherent value of arts practice in coproduced research is that ‘art struggles with chaos but it does so in order to render it sensory’ (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994: 205). Art is able to do this because of the way art organises materials, form, movement, words and so on, according to an internal system (Grosz, 2008). It does this to produce intensities and sensations that are not instantly recognisable. In doing so, one creates access points to cultural phenomena and social tensions that can otherwise be overwhelming; while foregrounding less easily perceived aspects that are at risk of being

excluded. The arts practice facilitated during this doctoral research project provided a valuable boundary space where academic theory and the needs of grassroots projects could coexist.

A practice-research approach enabled the project to analyse and interrogate processes of engagement through an affective lens. This shift in lens reconfigured how we approached the theme of *Spaces of Dissent*. We began to articulate dissent as a series of embodied encounters. By shifting our focus of dissent, we were able to consider how generating dissent need not only be seen as a demand or obstruction but instead an opportunity to (re)evaluate how bodies relate to one another and their material environment. Dissent does not only take the form of direct opposition but also encourages the acceptance of interdependence and shared vulnerability. By emphasising shared vulnerability, it is possible to draw out how affective relations of vulnerability can generate non-hierarchical social relations through embodied practice. We harnessed the notion of *affective relations of vulnerability* through our film practice by implementing the concept of haptic visuality. Similarly to how these kinds of relations have been acknowledged in embodied facilitation (Goia, 2008) and also radical protests (Butler, 2015), affective relations of vulnerability can enable an alternate way to encounter wide reaching political and social issues. It is by enabling new perspectives and disrupting dominant narratives that vulnerability can be construed as dissent. By identifying the relations that emerge between bodies, it becomes possible to start considering in what other ways and in what other kind of spaces can embodied encounters and affective relations of vulnerability be produced through arts practice. The practice-research approach therefore allowed us to attend to affective moments within the community partner's everyday activities, rather than only analysing more governance structure and specific methods of decision-making.

Expressive artefacts and legacy

Finally, I would like affirm the importance/value of coproduced practice-research in the sense of what it leaves behind; what it presents after the event. The establishment of practice-as-research has seen rich conversations debating the need and ability to translate arts practice into something tangible. The concern has often been that through the dissemination of practice, there is a risk of reducing the ephemeral, affective moments of performance (Piccini & Rye, 2009; Piccini & Kershaw, 2004: 90). It has been stated that projects in screen media 'produce (relatively) stable objects' (Nelson, 2013: 6). I contend that the three films we coproduced act as expressive artefacts of Coexist, hinting at what might be rather than documenting simply what was (Piccini & Rye, 2009). The films exist both *a part of* and *apart from* the specific contexts in which they were made (O'Sullivan, 2006). The deliberate decision to elevate affective

relations of vulnerability over more fixed and stable visual representations of Coexist as an organisation, will enable the films to sustain an autonomy that reaches beyond the myriad meetings, workshops, exercises and public events we held over the course of the project. The films do not attempt to tell the viewer about Coexist or what we did as part of our coproduced project, instead the films attempt to evoke the Coexist project as an unfolding entanglement of human, non-human and material relations.

The film *Keyhole Whispers* (2015), offers insight into how the wider ethical considerations of a project such as Coexist manifest in seemingly mundane moments, such as with issues of exclusion and the security of the building. Importantly, the film foregrounds a more materialist perspective in place of any more formalised narrative that clearly distinguishes between different viewpoints and possible resolutions. With *Conversations in Neon* (2016), there was an opportunity to engage with the less tangible and often overlooked aspects of the gentrification phenomenon. The film deliberately skewers linear cause and effect narratives regarding processes of gentrification. Instead the film provokes affective relations of vulnerability by engaging the felt sensations embedded within the gentrification phenomenon; the anxiety, guilt, frustration, nostalgia and hope. In doing so, the film foregrounds an expanded empiricism, increasing the scope of what Coexist might engage with through their regulatory processes. Lastly, the film *Fragment/Sustain* (2017) was made to reconfigure notions of sustainable practice. The film counteracts stable and linear representations of practice, instead presenting time as disparate and lacunary. The film allows the viewer a more dynamic relation with past events, where meaning is more explicitly contingent. In this sense, the film encourages a more vulnerable relation between Coexist and their own past. A willingness to embrace the more haphazard and chaotic moments can be seen as an antidote to more restrictive notions of success and development that ideas of sustainability can often engender.

As the coproduced doctoral project came to a close, the turnover of staff at Coexist rapidly increased. The survival of the Coexist project placed increasing pressures on the already-at-capacity team. There is a sense of irony in that the purpose of this coproduced project was to construct more transient, spatial disruptions through arts practice, yet the coproduced project itself outlasted many of the participants who were integral to its production. It has been acknowledged that there is a confused landscape regarding the social impact of participatory and interactive film practice; questions concerning ‘what does impact mean by those using it now? Can it be measured, and how? Who does the impact agenda serve – the funder of the work, the maker, the subject/participant, the audience...?’ (Linington, 2014). The outcomes that have been generated through this coproduced project are not always overtly visible. Nonetheless, collaborations have already continued independently from this coproduced doctoral project. Working relations continue between members of the Coexist team and the Productive Margins. In this sense, it is possible to accredit

coproduced research as both benefiting the specific context of a project but also facilitating and empowering ongoing working relations between different people and institutions in society. There is a continued shared commitment to experiment through collaboration and further enable the cross-pollination of ideas.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I - Coexist Approach Document

[The following is taken directly from Coexist's Core Purpose and Approach document]

Core Purpose

Coexist co-creates spaces and services that best provide for the communities that surround us.

Definitions:

‘Coexist’: Coexist CIC and CBS as legal entities, Centre Of EXcellence In Sustainability, the staff team, board of directors and trustees, our stakeholders and partners, our community.

‘Creates’: Makes, builds, produces, designs, co-creates, manifests, catalyses, procures, facilitates.

‘Spaces’: Buildings, rooms, structures, websites, forums, platforms for collaboration.

‘Services’: Affordable space, reception, community resources, gallery, community kitchen, dance studios, wellbeing centre, theatre and events spaces, meeting rooms, outreach programmes, educational events.

‘Best’: To the best of our ability, with the best intention, to the service of our community, with the view that we are supporting, helping and enhancing our communities.

‘Provide’: Offer, respond to, deliver.

‘Benefit’: Improve, enhance, bring happiness, stimulate wellbeing.

‘Communities’: All people we work with, licensees, customers, colleagues, neighbours, local residents, users, partners, stakeholders, the wider resilience network, other Bristol based peoples.

Approach

Leadership

As an organisation and as individuals we try to be responsive and compassionate whilst focusing on finding solutions to the obstacles we face. We hope to learn from others and simultaneously empower and support other individuals and organisations to become innovative pioneers of new

working paradigms.

- Coexist aspires to work creatively and collaboratively within our team and with our partners.
- We aim to be inspired and to inspire others by fostering a culture of critical reflection, encouraging debate in our decision-making processes and in turn allowing for constant change and development.
- Individuals are encouraged to take responsibility and be accountable to themselves and others.
- We aim to remain dynamic and responsive to change. We advocate a culture of experimentation therefore decisions are not final, but iterative and can be seen as a platform to future improvements.

Accessibility and Inclusivity

Coexist is here to support what is of most benefit to our diverse communities, treating everyone equally and inclusively. To Coexist is to exist at the same time in the same place, and in doing so we must be without prejudice.

- We welcome all groups and activities with a safe and open platform. This does not mean that we must agree with all social, environmental or political opinions, however an open platform provides a space to explore our differences.
- We work hard to find creative ways to progressively work with people that don't feel included in our project and/or society.
- We want to find solutions together and we are open to both criticism and praise of the project.
- We are continually looking to improve our accessibility; to our communications and physical access to the building.

Resilience

As a social enterprise we aspire to be socially, environmentally and financially resilient by:

- Using the financial tools and resources at our disposal in a responsible and accountable way.
- Supporting staff members to lead fulfilling lives in and outside of work.
- Ensure we do our best to make our building and actions as environmentally low impact as possible
- Engaging in local, national and global social issues to affect positive change.

Appendix II – Codesigning and Codelivering Spaces of Dissent

[The following is an extract from my own field note reflections regarding the coproduction process. I include it here to offer insight into how the trajectory of this doctoral project was informed and developed through meetings and workshops with the Coexist team]

How to create new spaces and new ways of being? The initial intention was for film to act as a space of dissent. To approach film as a new space of engagement and in doing so diversify the kind of spaces that are present within the organisation Coexist. Presenting film as a space of dissent is a considered decision to enable affective relations of vulnerability to emerge between the film and viewer. How can these spaces be facilitated? Where should we be creating these new spaces? These were legitimate questions that arose after presenting my first film to the Coexist team. The intention was for film to act as an additional space, separate to the already-at-capacity weekly operational meetings, so it was unsurprising that my decision to present the film during successive weekly meetings stirred some discontent. Conversely, my suggestion that this kind of film could inhabit digital space online away from Coexist's current forums was less positively received with concerns over presenting something more sensitive and deliberately vulnerable without any direct facilitation from the team.

After some initial discussions it was suggested that I develop the project alongside director Brendan Tate, with whom I had coproduced the Keyhole Whispers film and had also developed a working relationship by attending several external events and workshops together as representatives of Coexist. Brendan had previously expressed interest in considering how Coexist might exist in other spaces, beyond the limits of managing Hamilton House, and my own proposed use of film accorded with this ambition. Together we co-developed how Coexist's own ambitions could be realised through my research practice, as a means of enacting new forms of engagement with the long-term goal of increasing social impact. What was produced was a series of workshops and events, engaging participants from relevant social enterprises and community organisations, each workshop interrogating different questions and tensions surrounding decision-making, cultural diversity, exclusion in public space and gentrification. Each workshop delivered a new and dynamic approach to public engagement, which in turn enabled the opportunity to diversify and deepen Coexist's own ideas and discourses surrounding pressing social issues and everyday

tensions. Nonetheless, after the second workshop it became clear that the approach we adopted did not in itself offer enough clear moments to disrupt and refract how one perceives Coexist as an entity. Tellingly, the proposed role for film as a means to reveal the less easily perceived textures of everyday practice within Coexist was being neglected, instead film was being considered an extension of Coexist's own facilitation methods. As the academic researcher, one must take responsibility in sustaining the research thread while ensuring this does not restrict the potential for experimentation or limit the agency of the community partner. Coproduction is perhaps more than anything a commitment to relinquish some degree of control by learning to react and adapt as research emerges from a live situation.

The need to develop a format for facilitating films as spaces of dissent led to the design of a series of workshop and events working under the title Spaces of Dissent. This series of workshops emerged through collaboration with director Brendan Tate. There were shared goals between my own research project and two proposals Brendan had been developing for the team. There was firstly a shared functional goal to improve the efficiency of weekly operational meetings by constructing additional spaces of engagement to accommodate pressing social issues and big topics that were deemed too large. Within Brendan's own proposal, there was the suggestion that weekly agenda-led board meetings were not providing an adequately efficient or creative approach to decision-making. While Brendan was contributing to the *Keyhole Whispers* film, he was simultaneously drafting a proposal to reformat Coexist's decision-making forums and working culture. To enable this process, the wider Coexist team discussed the proposal in small groups during a weekly meeting, compiling a list of all the functions the weekly meeting performed: operations, team bonding, wellbeing, addressing what could be deemed problematic about weekly meetings and also what would be at risk if changed.

It was decided that by diversifying spaces of engagement, Coexist could sustain the less tangible or quantifiable benefits of weekly meetings by producing other spaces. This would develop several new trajectories. The coproduced research was an opportunity to enable greater critically reflexive practice, team involvement and creative thinking. Yet there would also be other additional spaces created, including a bi-monthly team breakfast and a monthly team yoga session. The last two spaces were specifically aimed at sustaining and increasing staff wellbeing and

integration. The second shared goal was that the research might enable an opportunity to increase internal and public engagement, while also experimenting with new ways of Coexist performing within wider society. Additional to the proposal to reformat decision-making forums and working culture, Brendan had submitted another proposal to the board of directors of how he might extend his role within the Coexist team. In this proposal he emphasised the need for more external engagement and facilitation as a priority in Coexist's operations. More specifically that while he had previously given particular attention to gaining ownership of the Hamilton House building, he came to identify the development of Coexist's facilitation arm as being an area with the greatest potential for immediately increasing the organisation's social impact. Together we codeveloped how Coexist's own ambitions could be realised through my own research practice, as a means of enacting new forms of engagement with the long term goal of increasing social impact.

The initial proposal was to coproduce four events with other community groups and social enterprises in the Bristol area. While we developed the ideas together, Brendan wrote up the proposal himself. It was intriguing to observe how an exchange of different discourses and ideas emerged as a singular vision within the proposal. The stated intention of the proposal was to 'develop a framework of coproduction' by using film as a means to increase engagement surrounding regulatory processes. In the proposal, coproduction both refers to the academic collaboration of my doctoral research project and also a desire to participate with other relevant social enterprises and grassroots organisations. The emphasis was to innovate solutions to everyday social tensions experienced on the ground through the cross-pollination of ideas with other organisations. The proposal states that Coexist can use their rich expertise in facilitation to create spaces of mutual learning and coexistence. It states that to progress, Coexist must go beyond their own ideas, avoid working in isolation, and allow resilience to grow across a network of small-scale organisations. The manner in which the research project had gained momentum since my initial presentation to the wider team was unexpected but very much encouraging. Most of all, it was the manner in which a shared practical and ethical motivation appeared to be driving this momentum.

We invited Coexist directors and potential facilitators of the workshops to attend a presentation in the Think Tanks space. It had been suggested in a conversation with the directors

to focus our consultation to specific team members during the development stage of the project. In attendance was Director Jamie Pike; Community Kitchen Ari Cantwell; Coexist Engagement Jon Newey; CoResist Daniel Balla. I began the hour-long session by delivering a short presentation that situated the proposal within an academic context. I also posed some of the more provocative questions my research had formed regarding Coexist's practice, such as: What is at stake in prioritising economic sustainability above other practice? To what end is Coexist defined by its current decision-making model? To substantiate my claims I used examples extricated from conversations with Coexist team members and my own engagement over the previous year. I also presented a video essay I had made to convey some of these ideas. After taking some questions we moved into describing how we imagined the workshops might be structured. Before the workshop, we had decorated the walls of the Think Tank with a collage of ideas, images, quotations and suggested film ideas all relating to the themes Brendan and I had identified during our development stage. At this stage in the project the essence of the workshops was present yet purposefully remained unformed and malleable, offering an opportunity to be moulded by the eventual facilitator. If, for instance, one traced the genealogy of our workshop interrogating decision-making - Who decides your future? - at this stage in the process the workshop was simply identified by the theme 'Barriers and thresholds'. This theme had been developed from the work generated by the film *Keyhole Whispers* and was concerned with issues of 'management', 'security', 'exclusion' and 'empowerment'. Indeed, it felt important for this particular presentation to offer a distinct enough sense of what might be possible without limiting the potential for facilitators to select a theme, develop the theme with us, and sculpt it into a well-defined workshop plan. Brendan introduced each theme, talked around some of the inspirations we had, and then responded to questions posed by the facilitators.

The questions posed demonstrated that the team had positively engaged with our ideas but also realised the opportunity this project presented and were therefore keen to interrogate both the practical and the wider purpose. How would we decide who to invite to the workshops was instantly raised: Who needs to be present? Why had we suggested representatives from other community groups and social enterprises? Why not 'hard-to-reach' community members? How could we accommodate other equally overworked community workers given an inspiration for the workshops is the lack of capacity in grassroots organisations? Could we pay for attendance? Travel

at least? Offer childcare services? Questions soon turned to content, how would we present our ideas and themes to others? Do we tailor our content for the invited participants or design it for all audiences? How can we allow space for academic language while also ensuring the workshops are accessible? How can we remain attuned to different levels of cultural capital? Some of these questions had practical answers relating to funding stipulations and timetabling that Brendan and I were ready to answer. Other questions we were keen to emphasise were still open for consideration. Perhaps most significant of all was questions posed regarding the overall purpose of this project: Why hold these workshops? Why should people attend? It was reassuring that these last questions were avidly discussed and considered amongst the facilitators with little input from either myself or Brendan. Below is an extract from this exchange that emerged after Jamie queried what tangible outputs this coproduced project would offer:

Danny: I do hear you (about tangible outputs) but the space in this world for not having outcomes is very very small and shrinking. And that's also a really important space to explore and maybe that's what this project is about? So that's not to say maybe it can't be a little bit more focused, but just to preserve that freedom.

Ari: I like this tension between what Danny and Jamie are saying because it's almost that tension between outcomes and outputs because actually an output might be very tangible, very concrete, maybe more what Jamie is saying, but actually the outcome is still there, the like conversation still happened, you know, a lot of the work we did at Ecodharma was very intangible ...in the actually doing in these workshops... but what it provided for me in reflection on my practice... same as university actually... my practice is massively impacted by these big huge intangible conversations that make sure that I reflect and they enact that in practice, so I think that there's not such a divide between more fluid conversations and potentially framing that in more practical, tangible... I think that's a really interesting tension. I think that it will be really interesting to see how that will be framed for other people, how do they see this has experiments in governance... I see it because I'm fascinated by this theory or these topics as exactly what you need to be working on when working in any kind of community organisation or hopefully anywhere, but that's also because that's what I'm personally interested in. And I think that how you frame these conversations will... it's not clear necessarily unless you're already on the fucking

bandwagon... that then goes on to... Jamie: Why? Why would we do this as an organisation? Why would someone want to be involved? Why would someone want to attend? How do we encourage dissent? - What would we find satisfying in our outcomes?... It's an offering of space in which people can be dissenting and have conversations that can't be had elsewhere.

Ari: I think the why is that these conversations are hard to come by when you're not in an educational institution/

Jamie: /Yeh exactly

Ari: /or when you're firefighting, crisis management, and that's where it comes to people's power of capacity to attend these things. Because if people like Bristol drugs project don't have these conversations, all they're doing is harm reduction, and that, in my opinion, is not enough. It's massively difficult in terms of funding cuts and it's the same here, I just used BDP as an example, but not having challenging conversations about bigger issues you're only doing crisis management, and that is not enough for any organisation responding to social issues, I think. I think that's my response to why... of course there's the why why why... And it's not the watershed, it's not about paying £8 a ticket to go hear David Harvey talk about public space.... It appeared the team had embraced the opportunity to enter into a space of experimentation that attempted to utilise the expertise of other social enterprises and grassroots organisations. Importantly, it was the format that was being experimented with and what systems of engagement would manifest. The intention was less to focus solely on one topic and instead consider how creating spaces, through dissent and mutual learning, might assist practice.

Appendix III – Spaces of Dissent Workshop Proposal

[The following is an extract from the initial workshop proposal we developed in response to the film Keyhole Whispers in 2016. The proposal is to host a series of externally facing workshops implementing film as a tool of engagement.]

Coexist Facilitates ‘Spaces of Mutual Learning’ Experimental governance within new economies

“Coexistence is the inter-relationship or inter-connectedness of all life, nothing can possibly exist in isolation.”

This project is co-produced with Greg Bond, PHD researcher, Productive Margins Forum

Aim

To develop a ‘co-production framework’ for Coexist to engage and facilitate work with external groups

Intro

If we are to continue to be resilient, whilst challenging the mainstream discourse, we will need to grow our awareness of other forms of experimental governance that are successful elsewhere. As well, if Coexist is to support the growth of new economies globally, it will need to develop tools that enable it to cross-pollinate knowledge and ideas.

By developing a framework for co-production we hope to go beyond the traditional model of providing consultation services delivered by ‘experts’. Instead we believe innovative solutions arise when we are able to go beyond all ideas, even our own. We are all leaders, capable of finding empowered solutions to the problems we face within ourselves and our communities.

Coexist can draw upon its rich facilitation experience to create spaces in which mutual learning can occur and coexistence is enacted. By engaging with groups in this way, social impact can be exponentially scaled by growing resilience of small-scale organisations pioneering the transition to a more sustainable future.

Why Co-production?

The means to bring about this vision cannot be defined in isolation. The process of developing this practice must be a living experience of shared inspiration, mutual benefit and co-ownership. Only then will its foundation be able to support the fruits it bears.

Project Delivery: Workshops

What compromises to innovative practice must be made in the quest for economic sustainability?

This question is one that challenges Coexist as it attempts to mature and evolve from being a mere disruption, into something enduring. It is a question that must be asked by any organisation pertaining to radical ideas that is aspiring to achieve permanence.

This project proposes to explore this central tension via a series of four workshops, in which spaces of mutual learning are constructed between Coexist and other specific community members, partners and social organisations.

The workshops will use film work to stimulate discussion. Each workshop will include generative practice that feeds both an exhibition and website to support wider engagement.

The working titles for each workshop are as follows:

- 1) Creating *With* not Providing *For*: Experimental Governance
- 2) Can you preserve a disruption? Sustainable futures
- 3) How does our understanding of value constitute our practice? Production of Knowledge
- 4) Everyone needs somewhere to go: Understanding exclusion in public space

An animator from the Coexist team will support the design and/or delivery of each workshop. This again maintains the integrity of the co-production process, whilst ensuring the content is grounded in practical relevance for Coexist. It will also mean more staff are experienced in the delivery of the framework and can contribute to its development.

Interactive Exhibitions

There will be four interactive exhibitions in the Think Tank culminating in a final exhibition in the gallery so the conversations in the workshops can be kept live and engage a wider group. Exhibition (TT physical space) and website (virtual space) are treated as the same space, co-constructed by those who participate.

Legacy

1. The project will animate and support the development of the Think Tank to become a thriving space for community engagement, where the Coexist team are able to raise ethical issues about its practice with the community.

2. A website will be developed as part of the project, providing a resource for Coexist to represent itself, distinctly separate from Hamilton House. The website will be used as a way of engaging a wider audience in the participation of the workshop themes. It can later be further developed as a means of engaging with the wider world.

Appendix IV – Experimenting with New Approaches to Filmmaking

[The following is an extract from my own field note reflections on how I experimented during the filming of *Conversations in Neon* 2017. I include this to give an example of the kind of artistic research and development I conducted for each film]

To find a new approach I conducted three sessions of filming. I wanted to foreground my own felt experiences at street-level in a manner liberated from the film language that I would often instinctively follow. There was a need to rupture from my own tendency for representational modes of thought. I therefore decided to spend the daytime in another location, by Bristol harbourside. The intention was to experiment with how I relate to the camera and sound equipment while existing in space. Choosing a new location was important because I had no preconceived ideas about 'what film' I wanted to construct. Indeed, I had no intention to construct a film with the footage I shot there. I conducted a series of short tasks in my attempts to use the camera equipment differently. I spotted a grouping of hulking metal embedded in the ground, which boats could use to moor. I started filming there, spending nearly ten minutes filming the series of chains emerging from the ground in big close ups.



Image: Still taken footage of metal chains on the ground at Bristol harbourside

I crouched onto my knees and moved in close. I followed the chains with body and camera, twisting my upper body and camera as I followed the loop of the chains. I began to acquire a mindset that enabled me to switch off from the what was happening in the world behind me and simply observe through the camera as if what I was viewing through the viewfinder was my natural sense of perception. Feeling motivated by my own attempts to blur the lines between my own observing body and the film equipment I set myself another task. I sat and filmed my own legs dangling over the edge of the harbourside for another ten minutes, staring at the small screen



Image: Still from footage taken in Bristol harbourside of my own legs.

displaying my legs, while also aware of the direct view of my legs in the periphery of my vision. What emerged was again small but considerable. A meditative space in which I would make small movements with my own lower body and watch the movement on the small screen, considering which was my primary mode of sensing, the physical sensation or the visual screen. I then completed one final task, admiring a busker with a slide steel guitar I offered a small contribution to be able to film the movement of his hands close-up. I thought I might film his movement in the same manner I approached filming the metal chains in the ground, yet with the variation of having to adapt to the performer's own movement. Unintentionally, what proved more significant was the

realisation that the on-board microphone of my camera was set too high, with a red light flashing indicating that the sound levels were distorting. Rather than stop to adjust, I simply carried on, accepting this is how the audio equipment would pick up the sound from that shoot.



Image: Still from footage taken in Bristol harbourside of a busker playing a slide guitar.

The exercises I conducted at the harbourside were spontaneous and contained. I found they fed into my approach to filming that evening and the following day in Stokes Croft. I spent the next shoot stood outside Hamilton House, viewing the street through my camera lens, while also listening through the separate audio field recorder. I recorded as I listened and viewed. What I found was that, by adopting the almost meditative approach I had experimented with at the harbourside, I was able to disengage with my own intention with regards constructing a film to convey the narrative of the two red neon signs. Instead I was able to linger and be aware to the unfolding moment of different actions and sounds: passing bodies; circling birds; gusts of wind. There was the rise and swell of bass tones from the engines of cars and buses; the light chatter of people passing by; the whips of bicycle wheels flicking puddles of water. Echoing above from a high window in the Hamilton House building was the distinct beat of african drums, dulled by the window and bricks interfering with the sound. While I listened to the sounds I realised the XLR

cable connecting my external mic was loose and causing a crackle when I moved. I began deliberately playing with the cable, jolting it to and fro, embracing the sharp eruptions of distortion as a quality of my sensing equipment. I soon began to move around the street, I attempted to walk along staring into my small screen to guide me, foregrounding the camera as my primary viewing device, as I had when filming my own body at the harbourside. As I slowly moved up and down the road, I began to try to follow the red light that cascaded across the ground and shop windows, I studied what objects had become been caught in the reach of the red light and in turn refracted the light elsewhere. I eventually climbed up the Hamilton House building, onto a small platform to engage with the materiality of the I'm Staying artwork. I began following the twists and turns of the curved glass tubes in a similar manner to how I had twisted my body to trace the movement of the metal moor at the harbourside. Filming the Stokes Croft area with this approach facilitated a new way of engaging with the materiality of the space and the flow of movement. This inquisitive study was led by my own instincts. In my attempt to critically engage with the notion of intra-activity, I emphasised my own sensing body in relation to the camera technology, producing almost an auto-ethnographic engagement with the space. It now felt appropriate to move beyond my own emerging ideas and integrate more perspectives.

Appendix V – Designing *Understanding Coexistence* Workshop

[The following is an extract from my own field note reflections regarding the design of our final workshops]

When designing the last workshops we explicitly wanted to construct a format that maintained the project's initial ambitions. The previous workshops and events had enabled the Coexist facilitators to experiment with different notions about who Coexist are and how they can exist in spaces away from the Hamilton House building. These activities offered spaces to develop aspects around Coexist's Facilitates project, which focuses on Coexist facilitating workshops for external bodies. With the Spaces of Dissent legacy it felt important to re-engage with the idea that these spaces could offer an alternative space specifically for the Coexist team and building users, adjacent to other decision-making forums. While the previous workshops had in part been motivated to work away from the day-to-day practice of Coexist, at risk of causing unwanted disruption, there appeared to me more of an understanding of what kind of opportunities the coproduced research project could enable. Furthermore, what kind of resource I could act as, instigating meetings, co-developing ideas, coordinating events. Therefore, the legacy project was designed in a way that would require less capacity, would be more flexible and fluid in relation to Coexist's ongoing practice. The intention was for this space to perform a different kind of role within Coexist's regulatory processes. Furthermore, as a site of experimentation, we all conceived these spaces as offering an opportunity for training in facilitation. It was deemed important that the Coexist team enable opportunities for the wider team to develop facilitation skills, the intent being to enable empowerment amongst the wider team and their involvement holding space.

I coproduced the legacy project alongside Daniel Balla, who led the social sculpture *Conversations in Thread* (2017). Daniel had become a director since that stage of the project. He is also the team member most sensitive to governance structures and systems thinking implemented in Coexist's day-to-day practice. Therefore, given his familiarity with the research project, it seemed fruitful to progress the project together. Perhaps most significantly, Daniel was heavily involved in the developing the bid proposal for Coexist to purchase the building. Initially I had thought we could lead with a workshop exploring gentrification, given the explicit ties to the kinds of displacement Coexist were potentially facing. Daniel felt for the team's own development

there was a more pressing need to first engage with 'coexistence', what this might mean in terms of relationality throughout the whole project beyond the Coexist team. This interrogation could enable something other forums did not. The Coexist team's bid proposal was ambitious, utilising the performativity of language in a distinctly Coexist manner. The proposal expressed the importance of *making space of chaos* as much as economic models. The slogan attached to the proposal is also one popular amongst anarchist groups that *another world is possible*. Nonetheless, this space was primarily held by Coexist directors, limiting the opportunity for the wider team and building users to critically engage with the recent tensions. Moreover, despite alluding to the more *chaotic* aspect of the project, there was still an overriding tendency to focus on Coexist as a clearly defined organisation and Hamilton House as a set of facilities. There was less opportunity to critically interrogate how *coexistence* materialises in everyday interactions and to attend to the discrete moments that are more difficult to quantify or attribute value to. This consideration of coexistence as a continuous 'doing' emerged, with Daniel Balla stating why he felt it was important for space to be created to engage with this topic. Our interrogation of 'coexistence' was developing and I began thinking of how I might use film to think through some of these ideas and, more importantly, how could film be utilised to evoke these ideas with those attending our spaces of dissent event.

Appendix VI – Spaces of Dissent Legacy Proposal

[The following is an extract of how the last workshops we held were developed as a Spaces of Dissent Legacy Proposal. The intention for the proposal was to design a format for the workshops that could exist beyond the coproduced research project, ensuring that the research would have a legacy and the spaces of critical engagement would continue within Coexist's everyday practice]

Spaces of Dissent: Legacy Proposal

The Spaces of Dissent series of workshops and events were organised and delivered between January-July 2016. A separate report will be constructed documenting this process and the knowledges generated during the events. This is a proposal for what should be the legacy of the Spaces of Dissent series given what we have learned and developed during this process.

Formation of Spaces of Dissent Series

A salient characteristic of Coexist has been its commitment to remaining responsive and adaptive to an ever-changing environment both within and outside the building.

Coexist have rapidly developed since a small group of friends were entrusted with regenerating the derelict office block Hamilton House. The building is now a fully functioning creative hub within Bristol, which has subsequently seen an increase in team members, with more defined departments, job descriptions and responsibilities.

Between the end of 2014 and the end of 2015 the wider team regularly discussed at weekly meetings that growing operational tasks have at times been prioritised over critical and creative practice. While this has been legitimately described as an inevitable process of any innovative or radical group – “Forming-storming-norming-performing” – others expressed their desire to see Coexist perform more ambitiously with the risk of shutting down within a year rather than plateau for the next twenty years.

In search of practical responses, there was general consensus that the weekly meetings were becoming strained in their attempt to fulfil multiple roles, and that there was a need to create more spaces of engagement with the wider team. In response we:

- Introduced Team Yoga
- Introduced Team Breakfast
- Increased Vision Days (annual to quarterly)
- Identified the Think Tank as a potential space for wider critical reflection

The last action - to develop the Think Tank into a space of critical reflection - was initially developed between Jamie Pike and Greg Bond as part of the Coproduced research strand of

Coexist Facilitates. This was then transformed into the Spaces of Dissent series of workshops with Brendan Tate after a successful funding bid from the Connected Communities funding body.

This led to three externally facing workshops and events being held by Coexist, exploring:

- Decision-making in governance.
- Diversity and exclusion within social enterprises and charities.
- Grassroots regeneration and gentrification.
- The purpose of these workshops and events was to explore identified issues and tensions within the everyday practice of Coexist with other building users and community actors within
- Stokes Croft. Firstly, this series would enable the time and space to give attention to large topics that we struggle to explore within our day-to-day roles. Secondly, it would enable us to engage with people that we otherwise do not get an opportunity to work closely with.
- The events enabled three separate facilitators from the Coexist team the space to consider their chosen topic and also experiment with different approaches of engagement. There will be a separate report documenting the success and problematics of these events, but in terms of creating a legacy of ongoing events it became clear that we would:
 - Design a framework that is more appropriate in terms of facilitators' and participants' capacity.
 - Place greater focus on the Coexist team as participants – while remaining open to inviting non-Coexist team members or building users.
 - Develop a consistency in how we document the events and any knowledge generated.
 - Assign responsibility for upkeep and maintenance of an online presence.

Project Proposal

To continue the spaces of dissent workshops as a regular two-hour event held every six weeks, to enable more critical reflexive spaces and encourage a greater culture of learning and personal development amongst the Coexist team. To elevate the role of film within these spaces as a form of critical engagement to contribute to research within this field.

Research

History is concerned with creating a narrative from shattered fragments – what is left after an event once it has occurred. Likewise, film also reconstructs time from a series of separate shots, each incomplete on their own, but brought together to form a whole. Both history and film hide the fragmented nature of their narrative through elaborate means to create something seemingly seamless. Yet what is left out and discarded can often enable a greater understanding of our pasts and presents.

The purpose of the spaces of dissent series is not to solidify accepted knowledge but to challenge dominant codes of behaviour and our own habitual ways of thinking. The intention is to allow space for any confusion or frustrations or queries to be embraced and explored together. Similarly, the impetus of how film will be used within this research is not to capture and represent 'Coexist' – where it has been and where it is going - instead film will be incorporated within critically reflexive spaces to both confront and interrogate the big topics we encounter within our everyday practice. Film has the ability to make palpable that which is not visible to the eye, it can allow us to explore something we encounter every day from a new position. Therefore, rather than use film to construct and contain a fixed image of Coexist we can use it to explore and evoke the messy entanglement that is 'coexistence'.

Structure

- Workshop held every six weeks
- Each workshop to last two hours
- Workshop to be held between 4pm – 6pm
- For all participants to be paid for one hour's work and volunteer the second hour
- A different Coexist member to facilitate each workshop
- Facilitator will be paid for planning and delivery at Coexist rates
- Theme for each workshop to be suggested by team in response to ideas and tensions acknowledged within weekly meetings
- Participants to include the Coexist team, non-executive directors and any other building users deemed appropriate given the workshop topic

Delivery

Project coordinators: Chloe Foy and Greg Bond

Project coordinators to manage schedule, manage budget, designate themes to facilitators, check-in with facilitator during planning period, ensure that the workshops (while varied) are consistent with purpose of project.

Facilitators: To be selected from the Coexist team and Board

Each facilitator will be allotted six hours (4 hours planning; 2 hours delivery), they will be responsible for responding to the selected theme, designing the two-hour workshop, communicating with the project coordinators to ensure the workshop is consistent with overall project aims, ensuring documentation has been considered.

Documentation: The facilitator, one participant and social media coordinator.

The facilitator and one participant from each event to reflect upon what happened and what was shared (either together or separately). This could potentially be a short blog or interview conducted with the Coexist social media coordinator. The facilitator can also suggest other approaches to documentation (e.g. a series of photographs; a digital story; etc..).

Purpose

Engagement - These should be useful spaces, spaces that are flexible and responsive to wider critical issues and tensions as they arise elsewhere in our everyday practice.

Developing a culture of learning – We are all experts and with each hold a unique set of knowledges. We should utilise the expertise and wisdom we have within our environment, while being encouraged to be open to new ideas.

Detachment – Within these spaces we should encourage one another to detach ourselves from our everyday job roles and discourses; to enable new perspectives to be attained; to experience new approaches to practice.

Collective Bonding - Importantly we want this to be a space where we share knowledge, stories, personal histories, approaches to practice. Where we can experience one another away from our everyday responsibilities and titles.

Personal Development – It is an opportunity for all team members to learn more about Coexist; learn and develop facilitation skills, critical engagement, and team exercises.

Experimenting and Developing new approaches to facilitation – With the expertise and skills that Coexist holds, we should be encouraging the facilitators to both draw upon their existing knowledge and take risks with new ideas and approaches to practice.

Future Coexist Interventions – These spaces should offer a chance to consider what future actions could be taken by Coexist within the building or wider society with regards the theme of the workshop.

Potential Themes

Power vs Responsibility - The anarchy of hierarchy and why it actually could be a good thing.

Movement, the body and virtual space – Facilitation methods, wellbeing, food and dance all emphasise the importance of embodied connections within coexistence. How does this configure with a growing reliance on maintaining an online presence? To what extent can marketing adopt an embodied approach? How might the swell of interest (both positive and negative) surrounding Period Policy have been handled differently if Coexist chose to reject any non-in-person forms of engagement?

Disruption and Development – Taking control of how we as individuals and a collective understand ‘gentrification’ and grassroots regeneration. ‘Where can do more? Or have we done enough already?!’

Re-engaging the past – How do past events both in Hamilton House and Stokes Croft impact our current practice and understanding. What is the significance of the so-called Tesco riots?

How do we consider the increasingly defunct squatting culture in Stokes Croft? Should we cut links with our past and only look forward?

Safe space – Some facilitators emphasise the importance of creating a safe space. As a community space, Coexist also has a responsibility to create a safe space. But when is it OK to allow or even encourage risk? At what point does safety come at the detriment of learning or inclusion? Through what lens should we regulate the artwork in the gallery, the products on sale in the canteen, the people allowed to use the space etc...?

Accountability - The importance of, and designing accountability – what does it really mean? What is good money and what is bad money? – How do we regulate how and where we receive money from? How many degrees of separation is a safe distance from an unethical source? Does it matter if we're doing something good with it?

Appendix VII – Table of Activities

Year of Project	Activity	Description
2014	Public Intervention: Street Art Installation	First public intervention held facilitated with community partner Coexist.
2014	Workshop	Connect Communities Festival held in Cardiff. Workshop explored theme of Spaces of Dissent with attendees through series of facilitated exercises.
2014	Film: Mild, Mild West	A film exploring notions of transient disruptions through analysis of Bristol's street art scene. NB – Film not submitted as part of final portfolio
2015	Film: <i>Keyhole Whispers</i>	Coproduced film exploring decision-making processes and issues of hierarchy and exclusion.
2015	Film: <i>Movement through Smooth Space</i>	A film devised with a member of CoResist, interrogating the transformative aspects of clowning. NB – Film not submitted as part of final portfolio
2015	Series of Workshops	First set of Spaces of Dissent workshops held with external partners.
2015	Public Intervention: Social Sculpture	Social Sculpture facilitated in the Bearpit underpass of Bristol
2015	Exhibition and Workshops	Connected Communities Fair at Somerset House showcasing the work produced during our first phase of Spaces of Dissent workshops.
2015	Exhibition	Gallery Exhibition at Hamilton House showcasing the work produced during our first set of Spaces of Dissent workshops.
2016	Film: <i>Conversations in Neon</i>	Coproduced film exploring processes of regeneration and gentrification.
2017	Film: <i>Fragment/Sustain</i>	Coproduced film exploring notions of value, time and sustainability.
2017	Spaces of Dissent: <i>Coexistence Workshop</i>	Workshop delivered during final phase of project
2017	Spaces of Dissent: <i>Gentrification Workshop</i>	Workshop delivered during final phase of project
2017	Exhibition	Gallery Exhibition at Hamilton House showcasing the work produced during our second phase of Spaces of Dissent workshops.

